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**SOME**  
**CONSIDERATIONS**  
Relating to the  
**PRESENT STATE**  
**OF THE**  
**CHRISTIAN RELIGION.**  
**PART II.**

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[Price One Shilling.]

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2

SOME  
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PRESENT STATE  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

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PART II.

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Wherein the Principal Evidence of the *Christian Religion* is explain'd and defended upon the Principles of *Reason*, as well as *Revelation*: With Observations on some Passages in the Book intituled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*, so far as concerns the Doctrine herein advanced.

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By ALEXANDER ARSCOTT.

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1 Pet. iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man, that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, with Meekness and Fear.*

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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CONSTITUTION

PRESIDENT

OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

T H E

## PREFACE.

**T**H E Subject of the ensuing Pages is of the greatest Concern and Moment to Mankind, and for that Reason, I would request my Readers to give it a thorough close Perusal, and not read it either cursorily or partially; for whether I have handled the Subject clearly and justly, or not, this I am certain of, it is of that Nature, that 'tis every ones highest Interest to believe rightly about it, and to live and act accordingly.

**T**H E World must now judge, whether I have done any Thing to Purpose, in my Endeavours to place this most necessary Subject in a clear Light: It is my Satisfaction that I can answer to my own Conscience, as in the Sight of God, for the Sincerity of my Intention; and if any Person with the like Sincerity of Intention, and true Regard to the Good of Mankind, shall be so kind as to point out to me any Mistakes I may have committed, it will be doing Service to the Cause of *Religion*, and for that Reason very acceptable to my self; for there is nothing I more desire, than to have this Subject rightly and clearly understood

As



derstood, and it will be Matter of Rejoycing to me, let it come from any Hand whatsoever.

I fear the Persons I am opposing (one especially whom I have particularly named and quoted) will think themselves somewhat unkindly treated, for being mentioned under the Denomination of *Deists*, and Opposers of *Christianity*; if I could have found a softer Term that would have expressed the Idea I intended as clearly, I should willingly have used it: I am sensible that some of them pretend to be Friends and Advocates for *Christianity*, and whoever dips no farther into their Writings than the *Title-Page*, may be ready to esteem them such; but if we peruse the whole, we shall find nothing more or less, than an artful labour'd Design to subvert and destroy the *Christian System* in every Part of it, which Design insinuates it self the more successfully into the Minds of the unwearry Readers, being introduced with a specious Pretence of doing Service to it: that this is not *Gratis Dictum*, I shall give the Reader a general Abstract of what is more particularly and apparently visible in one of their Master peices, (at least so esteemed) entituled *Christianity as old as the Creation*.

If to pick out the most difficult Parts of the *Holy Scriptures*, in Order to expose them at once to the View and Contempt of the Reader, by representing them as *unintelligible*, and consequently useless. If to represent some  
Facts



Facts there mentioned with Approbation, as contrary to our natural Ideas of the *Divine Being*, and of Mans Duty to Him and one another; If to attempt to invalidate the *Prophecies* of the *Old Testament*, which were always understood to relate to the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the *Flesh*: If to treat the Person of our Lord Himself, and His Apostles with Ignominy by reviving the scandalous Reproaches cast on them by the old Opposers of *Christianity*: If to mention the great Doctrines of *Eternal Rewards* and *Punishments*, in such loose ungarded Terms as plainly imply that they do not firmly believe them: If to deny the Reasonableness of that propitiatory Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the *Remission of Sins that are past* for His Sake: If to deny the Necessity and Usefulness of a *Divine Aid*, for the Living a *virtuous, pious Life*, according to the Rules of the *Christian Religion*, which the *Holy Scriptures*, especially of the *New Testament*, abundantly bear Testimony to, and which in the following Treatise is proved to be a *rational Principle*: If to charge all the Abuses committed by any Men, or Set of Men professing *Christianity*, since the first Introduction of it into the World, as the genuine Effect and Consequence of *Christianity* it self, and that in the most invidious and aggravating Terms: I say, if to do all this, be not endeavouring to subvert and destroy *Christianity* in every Part of it, I know not what is.

IT is not my Design to say any Thing here to these several Particulars, they are for the most undertaken by other Hands, to whom I leave them, only as to the latter Part, to wit, *The charging the Errors and Mistakes both in Judgment and Practice of the Professors of Christianity, on the Christian Religion*, is an unjust and unreasonable Charge ; let those who are guilty of those Abuses answer for them : *Christianity* in its original Purity, is not at all affected by it, but as these Abuses were brought gradually into the Church, by departing from that *Divine Principle of Grace and Truth* which is come by *Jesus Christ*, the *Spirit of Truth* promised, and given by Him, which leads into and preserves in all Truth, and following our own Imaginations, and the corrupt Reasonings of Flesh and Blood ; so the most effectual Way for reforming all Abuses, is for *Christians* to return to it, that *Religion* may once more stand upon its original, and only substantial Foundation, which is the principal Design of the ensuing Treatise.

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## C H A P. I.

*Containing the Occasion and Design  
of this Treatise.*

**U**NDER the like Religious Concern of Mind, by which I was led to publish a former Treatise in Defence of the *Christian Religion*, I am again engag'd in Spirit to publish some farther Considerations on that Subject.

IN that former *Treatise* I endeavour'd to explain and recommend the *principal Evidence* of the *Christian Religion*, arising from the *Nature, End* and *Design* of it; which, I apprehend, has been variously received, according to the different Sentiments and Prepossessions the Readers have been under. Those who believe and profess *Christianity* sincerely, for the Good they have received, and hope to receive from it, some of those, I understand, have been pleas'd to express themselves favourably of the *Design*; as indeed it is reasonable to suppose, that an Attempt of this Nature (however mean the Performance may be) yet if it appears to be sincerely intended for the Promotion of Religion, in the most valuable Part of it, would be favourably received by those who are not only pursuing the same Thing, but actually in the Possession, in some Degree, of the good Fruits and Effects of it; of which, I doubt not, but there are some, amongst all the several Denominations of Christians, however they may differ in some other, circumstantial or less material, Points:

ON the other Hand, I have Reason to believe there are some, and those who are principally concern'd in the main Design of that small *Essay*, who think it does not answer the End chiefly propos'd by it, which was to recommend and explain the *principal Evidence* of Christianity, to those who were either doubtful concerning it, or in actual Unbelief, of which we have too many Instances in this corrupt Age: These I understand have objected (or at least some, who are acquainted with their Way of thinking, have objected for them) that the frequent Quotations from the *Scriptures* in that Treatise, have so prejudic'd the Minds of this kind of Readers, I mean the Opposers of Christianity, against it, that they would not be prevailed on to give it a Reading; and that to make Use of the *Scriptures*, by Way of Proof of Christianity, is, as to them, begging the Question, taking the Thing for granted which is to be proved, proving a Proposition by it self; which must be confessed to be a beggerly Way of Reasoning, and no wise applicable to the Method in that Treatise.

It is much to be lamented, that there are a Set of People in a Nation professing Christianity, so deeply prejudiced against the *Scriptures*, that to make Quotations from thence in any Manner to serve the cause of Religion, is esteemed by them sufficient to beget a Dislike or Contempt of that Performance: However, this is really the Case with some, and therefore it may not be amiss to lay before the Reader's View, for what Reason I thought my self oblig'd to make Use of so many Quotations out of the *Scriptures*, especially of the *New Testament*.

It is evident to any one who considers the Thread of that Discourse, that the Use therein made of the *Scriptures* was to give a plain Account of the *Christian Religion*, from the Writings of the first Publishers



lishers of it, which is (so far as concerns the written Account of it) going to the Fountain Head, before it became mixt and blended with the Inventions and Additions of Men, which make up a great Part of that which now goes under the Name of *Christianity*.

THIS, I then esteemed, and still think, a regular Method, and absolutely necessary to make Way for that which I intended, *to wit*, a Proof of the *Truth* of it. For whoever undertakes to treat of any Science or Institution, ought first to define what that Science is, of which he is about to treat, that is in the Present Case, to declare what is meant by the Words *Christian Religion*, and then, by comparing the stated Properties of it with something of the Truth and Certainty, of which we are well satisfied, the Truth and Certainty of the Thing is effectually prov'd and established. This is a well known Method among *Mathematicians*; that is, by clearly defining the Terms of a Question or Proposition, and settling some Properties of it, tho' at present the Truth of those Properties be not certain, but is the Thing to be prov'd, yet by comparing them with other Propositions, or Maxims, already known to be true, the Truth of the Proposition in Question becomes established.

As this is a substantial Method of Reasoning, so to do otherwise, that is, to pretend to prove the Truth of something without defining what is meant by that Thing, is very preposterous and uncertain; for if the Thing in Debate be not clearly understood, all Debates about it must be liable to the same Uncertainty: Which is the true Reason that so many Books are writ, and Arguments used, to no Purpose, both on the Subject of Religion and otherwise, because Men do not clearly know what they write or argue about, which must tend only to amuse, not to inform one another, and is the ready Way to *Scepticism*.

To apply this to the Present Occasion : The *Christian Religion* in its present State, (tho' a Thing very easy and intelligible in it self) yet is not rightly understood by too many of those who are in the Profession of it ; but the Generality take it implicitly, as delivered down to them by their Fore-fathers, or taught by their several Leaders, which hath produc'd great Variety, and in some Points, Contradictions in Sentiments, which cannot be all true : This led me to give the plainest Account of it I was capable, out of the Holy Scriptures, which I reduced to the Form of a Definition, *p. 9.* and explain'd more particularly in the remaining Part of that, and the Following Chapters. But the Use therein made of the *Scriptures*, was not by Way of Authority to Unbelievers, for I was very sensible that they are not so with them (tho' to all good *Christians*, who know the true Benefit of their Profession, they are so, being known *to make wise unto Salvation through Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ* :) But the *Scriptures* were made Use of in Order rightly to state the Thing in Debate, and, for Proof of the Truth of it, every Man was referred to his *own Experience*, to something which passes in his own Mind, of the Truth of which he cannot doubt, which, if sincerely consulted and regarded, would confirm to him the Truth of that Account, of the *Christian Religion* delivered in the *Scriptures*.

AND this is the true Reason, why an Attempt of this Nature must be differently receiv'd and entertain'd. Those who have known the End of their Faith, and Hope in some good Degree answered, by witnessing *the Work of Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit and Belief of the Truth*, rejoyce in every Thing that tends to establish the general Truths of Christianity, the good Fruits and Effects of which they are actual Partakers of. Whereas on the contrary, those who are Strangers to these, either

either through Wilfulness opposing, or through Negligence disregarding, or by false corrupt Reasons silencing, the secret Calls and Visitations of God, by which (if they duly attended to them) they would become Partakers of the same Thing, cannot, as they pretend, (generally because they are resolv'd against it, and will not) see the Strength or Pertinency of an Argument in Favour of the *Christian Religion*, drawn from the Topick of Experience, *Because say they, whatever it may be to others, 'tis nothing to us who are ignorant of it.*

HOWEVER, as all are not gone the same Lengths in their Opposition to Christianity, some being less, others more open to Conviction ; some resolving to oppose it, because it is contrary to their beloved Lusts and Passions, which they are determin'd to gratify at all Hazards ; others through Affectation of Singularity, or an Opinion of their own superior Sense and Understanding, compared with that of the first Publishers of our *Holy Religion*, in which they pretend to see many Defects, tho' they were never yet agreed what to substitute in the Room of it : Both of these are very much shut to Conviction, the one, through Wilfulness, having given themselves up to follow their vitious Inclinations ; the other, through Pride and Conceitedness, having entertain'd so great an Opinion of the Beautiffulness of their own Conceptions, (as People are naturally very fond of the Productions of their own Brain) that it is very difficult for them to think of parting with them. But there are a third Sort more honest and sincere than the former, who do not so much oppose, as doubt or question, the Truth of our *Holy Religion* ; there are some Difficulties, they say, which they would be glad to have remov'd, some Doubts which they want to have answered ; *They cannot, they say, satisfy themselves, or render a Reason to others, for some Parts of the Christian System,* (which generally, when



when sifted to the Bottom, are no real Parts of it) for the Sake of those, I am willing to publish some farther Considerations upon that Subject, because I esteem them Objects of every good Christian's kind Regard. And as they are for a Religion which is *rational*, and for which they may be able to Render a *Reason* when required; which is indeed a Thing most desirable in an Affair of so great Consequence: I shall endeavour to prove the *Christian Religion*, rightly understood, to be such, and to render a *Reason* for it, arising from the Nature of the Thing, and the Relation there is between *God*, as an *All-wise, Powerful Creator, and Preserver*, and *Man*, as a *reasonable Creature*.

BUT before I enter upon it, I would make one general Observation, which is, that though there is a manifest Difference between those who oppose, or doubt of, the Truth of Christianity, as hath been already observ'd; some being openly and professedly vitious, others pretending to be Patrons and Practisers of *Virtue*; yet in Truth they agree in this, *that they are all of them, as such, real Promoters of Vice*; and it is hard to say which more so: There are some Reasons to believe (which may seem a Paradox) that the more *virtuous* a Person is, or appears to be, under that Circumstance, the greater Enemy he is to *Virtue*; for this Reason, because the better Man an *Unbeliever* is, the more he strengthens and encourages others in Unbelief; that is, the more he contributes to destroy those Restraints from *Vice*, and Obligations to *Virtue*, which are peculiar to the *Christian Religion*, and are in their Nature the strongest and most powerful that can be, I mean, the firm Belief of *Immortality*, and of a *future Judgment*, and of *Eternal Rewards and Punishments* consequent thereupon, which are Doctrines brought to Light, or reveal'd by the *Gospel*, and peculiar to it; and those who are in this Belief,

Belief, and abide in the Sense, and under the Influence of it, must act *virtuously* in all their Conduct, under the strongest Inducements of every Kind, not only because a *virtuous, religious, pious Life*, is reasonable in itself, and tends to our Comfort and Happiness in this Life, to the Health of our Bodies and Tranquility of our Minds, (as it certainly does) but also, and more especially, because they know themselves to be accountable Creatures, and believe they must give an Account to God for their Actions, and that according to the *Deeds done in this Body*, they shall at last be judged, and rewarded or punished everlastingly.

WHEREAS the *Unbelievers*, those who are *virtuous* of them, act chiefly upon Motives which relate to this Life, the Conveniencies of the Thing, and the Good which it produces, in preserving the Health of our Bodies, and the Peace and Content of our Minds, and the Service it does for maintaining Societies in Order, &c. (all which are included in, and more effectually secured upon the *Christian System* :) But as to a *future Judgment*, and everlasting *Rewards and Punishments* after Death, they are either wholly silent about them, or speak of them in ambiguous Terms, or even deny, them; at least as to their *Eternal Duration*: It being one of the principal Designs of some of them, to free Mankind from those *slavish Fears*, and that *Anxiety*, which the *Christian Religion*, as they pretend, brings them under.

AND tho' it must be acknowledged, that too many who profess to believe the Doctrines of *Immortality* and a *future Judgment*, do live and act as if they were not in earnest; yet it cannot be denied, but that these Doctrines in their Nature and Tendency, if duly regarded, are the greatest Restraints that can be supposed (of any Thing *extra nos*) against every Thing that is evil; and therefore their acting

acting *vitiously*, is both contrary to their own Principles, as well as a strong Argument of the great Depravity of *Human Nature*, and consequently, that it hath need of such a *Divine Inward Aid*, as the *Christian Religion* proposes to be always present with them, seeing the strongest Motives and Inducements (and such are those of a *future Judgment* and *Eternal Rewards* and *Punishments*) when considered at a Distance, do not prevail upon some to live *virtuously*, &c. But the *Unbeliever*, whether he acts the *virtuous* Part, or the contrary, must be allowed not to be under the same powerful Restraints from *Vice*, or Obligations to *Virtue*, seeing as hath been observed, he is not in the firm Belief of *Immortality*, and *Eternal Rewards* and *Punishments*. And as for a *Divine Assistance* to do the Will of God, he is so far from believing or expecting any such Thing, that he even denies and disclaims it: In both which Respects, the *Christian Religion*, is greatly preferable, the Truth of which I shall now endeavour to prove.

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## C H A P. II.

*Containing some Principles or Postulata, which are the Foundation of the Argument in Proof of the Christian Religion.*

**A**ND first, by the *Christian Religion* I would be understood to mean, not the Religion of *Papists*, (which is the farthest distant from it of any Thing that bears the Name) nor the Religion of *Protestants*, or of any particular *Church* or *Society* of them distinct from others, though I believe there are good Christians of all *Societies*, as well as that all *Societies* have their Defects and Weaknesses, which they are too forward, imprudently, not to say



say uncharitably, to expose to the common Enemies of the Christian Name, who are well pleas'd, whilst they are endeavouring to subvert *Christianity* in general, to find, that the several Professors of it are helping them in that Work by biting and devouring one another ; though it is Matter of Satisfaction that this Temper is at present somewhat abated, and a Spirit of Charity does more and more ('tis to be hoped) prevail among Christians of the several Denominations, than formerly. But (not to digress too far) by the *Christian Religion*, I mean the *Religion* of the *Primitive Church*, that which was first Preach'd and publish'd to the World by the *Apostles* and first *Ministers* of the *Gospel*, who receiv'd it from *Christ himself*: This I attempted to give some Account of in my former Treatise p. 9. by Way of Definition, which that I may be clearly understood, and because this may fall into some Hands which have not seen that former *Treatise*, I shall here transcribe. “ *Christianity* is a divine In-

“ stitution, by which God declares himself reconcil-

“ ed to Mankind, for the Sake, and on the Account

“ of his beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ, and

“ what he did, and suffered for them, on Condi-

“ tion of Repentance, Amendment of Life, and

“ Perseverance in a State of Holiness ; for which

“ End, he also offers them the Help of his Grace

“ and good Spirit, which is sufficient for that End :

“ All which taken together may be called Salva-

“ tion, tho' in a proper Sense, Salvation consists

“ in the last, viz. in that Help which Men re-

“ ceive from the Grace and good Spirit of God,

“ according to the Words of the Apostle, *Rom. v.*

“ *10. If when we were Enemies, we were reconciled*

“ *unto God, by the Death of his Son, much more be-*

“ *ing reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life. Eph. ii.*

“ *8. By Grace are ye saved thro' Faith, and that not*

“ *of your selves ; it is the Gift of God. Tit. iii. 5.*

“ According to his Mercy he saved us, by the Washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

THIS is what I mean every where by the *Christian Religion*, when I make Use of that Term; the Truth of which I shall endeavour to prove by Arguments drawn from the Nature of the Thing, and the Relation there is between God as an *All-wise, Powerful, Beneficent Creator and Preserver*, and Man as a *reasonable Creature*. In Order thereto it may be observ'd, that the *Christian Religion*, according to this Account of it, is a *practical Science*, teaching Mankind something to be done, and the Means of doing it (as for the *Credenda*, or Things to be believ'd, I have spoken to them in my former *Treatise*, in the 2d and 3d Chapters, to which my Readers are referred.) That which the *Christian Religion* teaches to be done, is allowed by its Adversaries, to be in it self good and agreeable to our reasonable Nature, and consonant with the Sense of the best *Moralist*, only the Christian extends the Matter of Duty farther, carries it to a greater Perfection than any other *System of Religion or Morality* ever did: Inasmuch, as it not only reaches to our Actions in particular Cases, but to the Habits and Disposition of our Minds; so that a Christian really such, is inwardly and habitually changed, the Inclination and Relish of Evil being taken away, he has no Desire after it, but an Aversion to it at all Times, and in every Case; the Root from whence it springs being destroy'd, and the Love and Relish of good being implanted in the Room thereof. Such an one becomes gradually habituated to it, and brings forth good Fruits agreeable, with as great Pleasure, and much greater, than before he brought forth evil Fruits, the general Bent of his Mind being now turn'd that Way; and this in Scripture is called, *putting off the Old Man with his Deeds*, and  
*putting*

*putting on the New Man, being made Partakers of the Divine Nature, renewed into the Image of Him that created him ; and is the peculiar Design of the Christian Religion, being the great End of Christ's Coming in the Flesh, essential to it, and inseparable from it, and is in fine the Work of God.*

Now then, if it can be prov'd that God really does work this Work, that is, doth operate on the Minds of Men, for the changing of them inwardly and habitually from Evil to Good ; the *Christian Religion* is established as to that main and essential Part, viz. the Influence which it has on the Minds of Men, for their Improvement and Reformation : And this I hope to do by an Argument which appears to me reasonable, and such as the Nature of the Thing to be proved is capable of, (for 'tis in vain to expect *Mathematical Demonstrations* on Religious or Moral Subjects ; for if they were capable of such, we should then have no more Controversies about the one, than we have about the other.)

IN Order to it, I suppose in the first Place that there is a *God*, a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness, who made and created all Things of His own good Pleasure, by the Word of His Power, and by the Same, sustains and preserves them when made and created ; that as the creating of the World was the Effect of His goodness, so He is continually communicating to his Creatures of the same Goodness, by taking Care of them, by providing for them, supplying their Wants, strengthening their Weaknesses, preserving the several Parts of His Creation not only in their Existence, but in that Order and Harmony, and that constant Relation one to another, in which they have existed from the Beginning to this Time, as a well ordered beautiful Piece of Workmanship ; which Care of the Divine Being is what is generally call'd by the Name of *Providence*



AGAIN, I suppose that Mankind, the most excellent Part of God's Creation in this lower World, as being endued with the Faculties of *Reason* and *Understanding*, as well as having the Use of *Speech*, by which, they can communicate to each other the Sentiments of their Minds ; which Faculties, all other Creatures we are conversant with, are destitute of: I say, this Creature, notwithstanding the Excellency of his Nature, it is evident, has great Defects and Failings ; in particular, in that most noble Part of him, his *Mind*, the Faculties of which, *to wit*, the *Understanding*, *Will*, and *Affections*, being evidently much depraved, and this Depravity, having spread it self, in general, more or less throughout the whole *Species* ; by means of which, many of those whom God has made *reasonable Creatures*, act below the Sphere of *brut Animals* ; others not in so great a Degree of Depravity, yet all, more or less at Times, acting contrary to the Rules of right Reason, and that good Understanding, with which as Men they are endued.

I do not meddle here with the Enquiry, how this Depravity came first into the World, but as it is evident there is such a Thing, so I suppose it true, and take it for a *Postulatum* in Order to make Way for the Argument I shall build upon it. Only thus far I see no Danger in asserting, it being reasonable to suppose it, that when God made *Man* (and the same is applicable to any other intelligent Being) He made him *good, upright, sincere*, without any Mixture of *Evil, Falshood* or *Deceit*. I cannot understand, that a Creature, as coming out of the Hands of a Being perfectly *Pure and Good*, can be otherwise than such ; but yet, though it is reasonable to suppose he made them good, it is as reasonable to suppose, he did not make them absolutely and unalterably so, (for there is none good in that Sense but one, that is God) but in a finite, limited Sense,

Sense, as well as that he did not make them Omnipotent, and Omniscient. But the Power and Knowledge were finite and limited, otherwise, Man in his created State had been, not only in the Image, or Likeness of God, but equal to Him.

AGAIN, as their *Goodness, Power and Wisdom*, is finite and limited, so as such, 'tis alterable and fallible, and consequently, liable to fall from that State, and can no otherwise be certainly preserved by it, but by the same *Infinite Power* by which it was at first made such. For that Being, whose *Power and Wisdom* is finite and limited, is possible to be overcome or deceived, by another more powerful and subtle, which yet may be also finite and limited; or by not constantly attending, or adhering to that *Power* which is *Infinite and Unlimited*, in which alone its Preservation consists. For I cannot understand, how a Being, whose *Power, &c.* is limited and finite, and consequently, vincible and fallible, can certainly be preserved from falling, but by a *Power* that is *Infinite*; nor how when fallen, can be restored again certainly, and preserved from a Relapse, but by the same *Power*.

ALL which taken together, is a rational Account of the Fall of Man, and the original of Evil as to him, as well as of the Continuance and Prevalence of it, and points directly to the only Means of his *Restoration*, (of which more by and by.) and is in Substance, perfectly agreeable with the Account given of it in Holy Scripture; in which, though there may be some Things in the Manner of Expression hard to be understood, yet the Thing, as there delivered, is easily to be accounted for in the Reason and Substance of it, when separated from the Dust which Men of perverse Minds, Enemies to the *Christian Faith*, have rais'd about it.

BUT, not to dwell too long on the Manner how *Sin or Evil* was first introduced among Mankind, which

which has been Matter of much unprofitable Dispute, among those who are imprudently curious in Affairs of this Nature : It is sufficient for our present Purpose, that it appears in Fact, there is such a Thing, and that it is spread universally among Mankind, who all have been, in a greater or lesser Degree, tinctured with and under the Power of it. And it is as evident, that whilst Men remain in that State of Depravity, though they become Objects of the Mercy of God upon Repentance, yet are till then, unreconciled to Him : This is both agreeable to the Reason of Things, (for what Agreement can there be between two Things perfectly opposite and contrary to each other ; as are the Pure and Holy God, and Man in a State of Pollution and Defilement ?) and is not denied or disputed by those who think and write soberly on the other Side of the Question, who generally agree in recommending a *virtuous Life*, a *Life* according to the Dictates of *Right Reason*, (which some of the *Heathen Moralists* call, *living agreeable to Nature*) as the only Way to Happiness, or in other Words, to the Favour of God.

WHERE then lies the Point in Dispute, between the *Christian* and the Opposer of *Christianity* ? *Answer*, In this principally, viz. By *what Means*, Man, in a State of Depravity, and as such, out of the Favour of God, may be delivered out of that State, and brought into a Course of Virtue and Piety, and in Consequence of it, reconciled again to God. The discussing of which shall be the Subject of the next Chapter.



## C A H P. III.

Containing Arguments built on the foregoing  
P R I N C I P L E S.

**I** Take it then for granted, that there is a *God* who created all Things, and Mankind in particular, good, whose Care and Providence is over all His Creation, Mankind as well as the other Parts of it: That Mankind have declined from that State of Purity and Uprightness in which they were created, in which State they are unreconciled to God, and that they cannot become reconciled to God again, without returning to that Purity and Uprightness, in which they were at first created, (or being sincerely entered into the Way leading to it) for that which hath let or hindered their Reconciliation to God, will continue to let (the same Cause will ever produce the same Effect) till it be remov'd or taken out of the Way. The main Question then is, how is this to be effected? By what Means may an *evil vitious Man* become *pious and virtuous*, and consequently acceptable to God? By making the best Use he can, of the Powers and Faculties which God has given him as Man, say the *Deists*, which are compleatly sufficient for that End, by acting according to the Dictates of right Reason; which they sometimes call the *Law of Nature*, and the Religion resulting from it, the *Religion of Nature*, or *Natural Religion*.

ON the other Hand, the *Christian* says, and I hope to make it evident, that the making the best Use we can, of the Powers and Faculties we have as *Men*, is not a sufficient Means to enable us to become *pious and virtuous*; and that *Reason*, as  
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Mankind are endued with it, or any other Power or Faculty meerly humane, is not a proper Foundation to build Religion in any right Sense upon ; but that to assert the Sufficiency of it for that End, is inconsistent with all Religion, and that Religion, in the Nature of the Thing, necessarily supposes, and implies a *Divine Aid and Assistance*, distinct from, or super-added to those Powers and Faculties, which we as Men are endued with.

I have before suppos'd, that as Man is an *Intelligent Being*, so he is a *created Being* ; in Respect of the first, he is capable in many Cases to judge rightly between Truth and Falshood, not only as to the common Affairs and Occurrences of Life, but the Obligation and Reasonableness of Moral and Religious Duties, the Maxims on which such an Obligation is founded, being in many Cases clear and evident : But in Respect of the last, as he is a *created Being*, his Understanding and other Faculties being finite and limited, tho' he can judge rightly of Moral and Religious Duties in some Cases, and act accordingly, yet he cannot certainly, and in all Cases, be preserved both from Error of Judgment on the one Hand, and Errors in Practice on the other, without Assistance from Him who is all-wise, and all-powerful ; for if he could, his Understanding and Power would not on that Supposition be finite, but infinite.

I have also suppos'd, that God who created *Mankind*, is absolutely and perfectly good, without any Degree of *Evil* or of *Imperfection* ; and as he is so, 'tis reasonable to believe that He requires, that His Creature *Man*, in Order to his Acceptance with Him, should be holy, simply without any Exception, or Mixture of the contrary ; every Degree of *Evil* being as such contrary to His Divine Nature. Agreeable to which, the Commands of God in Scripture, relating to that general Duty which

which He requires of Men as His Creatures, are express'd in such Terms as necessarily imply Holiness or Purity, in this extensive Sense, as *Levit. xx. 7.* and *xi. 44.* *Ye shall be holy, or, be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.* *Mat. v. 48.* *Be you perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* *1 Pet. i. 15, 16.* *As He that has called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of Conversation.* Again, *1 Thess. v. 22, 23.* *Abstain from all Appearance of Evil, and the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus.* I might add many more Citations out of the Scriptures of both Testaments, (it being manifestly the general Tendency of the Sacred Writings) but these I have chosen (not so much by way of Authority to the Adversaries of Christianity, to whom I am sensible they are not so, but) because they express what I intend, in the clearest and fullest Terms, (fuller than any other Words I am at present capable to express them in) and contain this rational Proposition, *viz.* That God, who is perfectly Good and Holy, requires that His rational intelligent Creature Man, should be like unto Himself, Pure and Holy, free from all Evil and Defilement without Distinction; which is agreeable to the pure Nature and Perfection of the Divine Being, and that Relation there is between Him, as a most wise and powerful Creator, and Man as an intelligent rational Creature: And to admit of any Distinction, in favour or allowance of any degree or kind of Evil, is not only inconsistent with that Relation, but opens a Door, by which Sin and Iniquity, in every Degree and Kind, may, and does gradually enter, and is propagated in the World. This is plain to any common Observer of things, the worst of Men quieting their own Consciences in some Sort, and excusing themselves to others, under



der the Distinction of invincible Infirmities, the Frailties of humane Nature, the Shortness of our Understandings and other Faculties, joined with the many strong Temptations and Provocations with which they are surrounded: All which they pretend, render it absolutely impossible for any Man to be preserved in a steady Course of *Virtue* and *Piety*. Which would be a reasonable Plea on this Supposition, that *Mankind* in these Things are left to themselves; but supposing that a *Divine Aid* is always at hand to help their Infirmities, to enlighten their Understandings, to give Vigour to all the Powers and Faculties of the Mind and Body; by this means, it becomes not only possible to eschew Evil in every Appearance of it, and do Good in every Instance of it, as the same is presented to us, and becomes our Duty, but those who are long accustomed to the Pursuit of *Virtue* this Way, *their Hearts* (in the *Psalmist's* Phrase) *being enlarged*, the Faculties of their Minds being improv'd, and renewed, *run the Ways of God's Commands with Delight*; a certain Cheerfulness and Alacrity is given them, by which the ways of *Virtue* and *Wisdom* become *Ways of Pleasantness*, and *all her Paths, Paths of Peace*. That Men are in fact made Partakers of such a *Divine Aid* and Support, I am next to prove.

In Order to it, let it be remembred, that I have also suppos'd, that *God* is not only the Creator of *Mankind*, but that His Care and Providence is continually over him, as well as over his Creation in general. If this be allowed, it follows, that as *Man* is the Object of His *Maker's* Care, the whole *Man* is so, that is, both *Body* and *Mind*: For it is equally reasonable, at least (tho' I think much more so) to suppose, that His Care is over the latter, as the former, that being what denominates or constitutes the *Man*, or *rational Being*; and therefore, the

the most noble and valuable Part, as well as that in its Nature and Constitution it is *Immortal*, in both which Respects it is most worthy of the Care of its Creator.

THIS being suppos'd, the next Enquiry is, where- in this Care of the *Divine Being* over the *Mind* of *Man* consists? It is most reasonable to believe, that His Care and Providence is over the several Parts of His Creation, agreeable to their particular Natures, and their Subserviency to the Good of the whole; this might be easily illustrated by an Induction of particulars: But not to digress, His Care over *Mankind*, the rational intelligent Part of His Creation, is to preserve them in the due Exercise of their *Reason*, which comprehends all the Faculties of their *Minds*. In the due Use of which, for the Ends for which they were given us, consists our own Happiness, and our Subserviency to the Happiness of one another.

THAT such a Care over the *Minds* of *Men* is given them, appears from hence, because it is wanted so far, that without it *Men* cannot certainly be preserved in a steady Course of *Virtue* and *Piety*; for the Faculties of our Minds being finite and limited, and consequently as such, fallible, and liable to be diverted from the steady Course of *Virtue* and *Rectitude*, in which alone *Mankind* is acceptable to God; for the supplying this Defect, there must of necessity be the Care or Super-intendency of a Being whose Power and Wisdom is unlimited, and may therefore certainly be depended on; so that whoever lives in the firm Belief of this, and constant Reliance on it, will best be secured from Mistakes both in Judgment and Practice, in things relating to our present and future Happiness: which I take to be a direct Proof of a *Divine Aid*, which cannot be evaded, but by asserting, either that God does not require that *Men* should be holy, just,

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and good simply, without dispensing with some Defects and Failings, (which if admitted, we cannot assign where such an Abatement or Exception will stop) or else, that *Mankind*, as to his Wisdom and Power is infinite, and unlimited. The first is contrary to the absolute Purity and Holiness of the all-wise and powerful Creator. The second is contrary to the finite limited Nature of *Man* as a Creature. And therefore we may reasonably conclude, that as the Creatures, in their several subordinate Classes, are dependent in some Sort one on another, the Superior directing and ordering the Inferior, for the Uses and Purposes to which they were designed by the Creator of the whole; so the Creator being Supreme, presides over all, especially *Mankind*, the intelligent rational Part of His Creation, this last being most worthy of his Care and Providence, as being nearest in Similitude to Himself.

I know it is objected by some, *That the Creator of all Things, having formed the Universe, and placed the several Parts of it, in that Order in which they now, and at all Times have subsisted, has ordained certain Laws of Action and Motion, agreeable to their several Places, and Relations to the whole, and one another, in which Order they are to move and act by His Appointment: And as by this, the Course of things without us, is maintained, as we may observe, so our Actions, as Intelligent Beings, are directed by the Law of Reason, otherwise called the Law of Nature, which God has implanted in all Men for that End.* I allow it, but He has not by so doing left *Mankind* to himself, as He has not by appointing Laws of Motion, &c. left the World in general without His continual Care and Providence over it, without which there is great reason to believe (notwithstanding the stated Laws of Motion which are said to be settled in it) that the whole would fall back into its Original Chaos, as there is as much Reason to believe



believe, that *Mankind*, without His *Aid* and *Assistance*, would fall into the utmost Confusion, as in fact a great Part of *Mankind* have done.

In short, *Providence* (which implies the Care of God over the Minds of *Men*, (as well as their Bodies) for the Regulation and good Government of them, as well as over the other Part of His Creation) being inseparable from the Notion of God as Creator, whoever believes the one, must necessarily believe the other : And to deny either, leads directly to *Atheism*, or which is as bad, to *Epicurean Deism*, supposing the Deity an indolent unactive Being, who does not concern Himself in the Affairs of the World ; which is evidently inconsistent with all Religion, as I observed in my Entrance on this Argument. For Religion teaching *Mankind* to worship God, that is, to pray to Him for His *Aid* and *Assistance*, in Order to our living agreeable to His Will and our own Happiness ; to what End should we do this, if He does not concern Himself in communicating such *Assistance* ? Yea, if we should suppose, (which yet is very absurd to suppose) that His Care is over the External Part of the World, but that the Mind of *Man* has a sufficient Guide in it self, of it self, both for knowing and practising all that is necessary for its present and future Happiness, I think, Religion is then a thing of very little moment, seeing, upon that Supposition, we are capable of our selves, without His *Assistance*, to attain all that Religion proposes ; and if we are ever so religious, or put up ever so pious Addresses to God, we have nothing to expect from Him, but what we are already in the Possession of, or have as much reason to hope for without His Help ; which strikes directly at the very Foundation of all Religion, viz. *Faith in God, and a firm Trust and Confidence in Him, for a Supply of all Things necessary for Soul and Body*, which is the  
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very first Principle or Ground-work of it, and is supposed or taken for granted, by all those that enter seriously, and in earnest, on a religious Course of Life, and without it, all Acts of Worship are meer Mockery, trifling with the Divine Being, and of no real Benefit to our selves, and consequently can be no Duty at all, much less a reasonable one to *Mankind*.

I know it is objected by some, *That as our Powers and Faculties as Men, are finite and imperfect, so there is no more required of us than an Obedience suitable to such Powers; so that whoever does what he can, according to that Understanding and Ability with which as Man he is endued, does his Duty, and no more is required of him.*

To put this matter in as clear Light as I am capable, I do not by asserting the Necessity and Usefulness of a *Divine Aid*, in matters of Religion, affirm, that whoever is in the Belief of it, does from that Time commence a perfect Man, from all Errors both in Judgment and Practice, for as no Man becomes very wicked suddenly, but evil Dispositions grow gradually stronger by Time, till at last they become confirm'd Habits; so those Habits are not destroyed at once, but gradually weakned in Time, and the contrary good Dispositions raised and improved gradually, till at last they become confirm'd Habits of *Virtue* and *Piety*. And in the Course of the proceeding of this good Work, whilst the Strength of evil Habits are not entirely broken and destroyed, it is reasonable to suppose, that the Effects of them may at Times appear, where a constant careful Watch is not kept, in some Practices, according to the old Course of Conversation, which being the Effects not of Willfulness, but Unwatchfulness, are no doubt pardonable; and God who is merciful, will heal the Back-slidings of these, and love them again freely, upon

upon their Repentance and Reformation, where there is a true Sincerity in the main, and an honest Application in Heart and Spirit to Him for farther Strength, to be preserv'd for Time to come, by which means, as I said, the Power of these evil Habits will be gradually weakned, till at last they become intirely broken and destroy'd : Which certainly is possible, upon the Supposition of a *Divine Aid* ; and I would add, on no other Bottom, and therefore in the whole Progress of this good Work, this Belief ought always to be before us ; otherwise, we shall be in danger not only of falling into Evil, but of indulging our selves in it, supposing it impossible to be delivered from the Power of it ; whereas those who are in the Belief of a *Divine Aid* always attending them, though they fail sometimes, will not from thence be so discouraged as to give over the Pursuit, but taking the Blame to themselves, for their Neglect and Unwatchfulness, continue to pursue their Course, attending with the greater Carefulness unto their Guide, believing that notwithstanding their Weakness, they have a sufficient Strength on their Side, if they duly regard it, which may certainly be depended on for Preservation from Evil, and an Improvement and Perseverance in the way of *Virtue* and *Piety*. So that on the one Hand, they have the greatest Encouragement to enter into, and persevere in the Way of *Virtue* and *Godliness*, believing the compleat Attainment of that State possible by *Divine Assistance* ; and on the other Hand, if through Unwatchfulness they should sometimes be overtaken with a Fault, they do not therefore despair, nor are they so discouraged, as to think the Success impossible, but rather, (having applied with great Humility to the Throne of Grace for Pardon and Forgiveness) they become the more quickned in their Diligence, not knowing how long it may please God to extend

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His Mercy, or continue His *Divine Assistance*, or even prolong their Lives in this World.

HAVING premis'd thus much in Answer to the Objection, I say, that though our Powers and Faculties as *Men*, are finite and imperfect, yet inasmuch as a *Divine Assistance* is present with *Men*, God may justly, and does require of them Holiness, in that extensive Sense before mentioned, agreeable to His own Holy Pure Nature; and to say otherwise, that He admits of Evil in any Kind or Degree of it, is to open a Door for the most wicked and profligate Persons, to plead for, and excuse their Wickedness, and is as absurd, as to go about to reconcile *Light* and *Darkness*, *Good* and *Evil*, or to make the Terms of contradictory Propositions both true.

#### C H A P IV.

*The Influence which the Doctrine in the foregoing Chapter may reasonably be supposed to have on our Minds, in their religious Conduct: with Observations on some Passages in the Book intitled, Christianity as old as the Creation, &c.*

**I**T is Time now to consider the *Influence* which the Doctrine of a *Divine Aid* may reasonably be thought to have on *Mankind*, respecting their religious Conduct; which will bring us nearer to the principal Point, viz. *How far the Christian Religion is confirm'd and establish'd by it?*

AND first, in general, what a strong Inducement to a *virtuous, religious Course of Life*, is the firm Belief and Persuasion, that God, to whom we must be accountable for the Deeds done in the Body, is always present with us, as a Witness of our Actions? This in the Nature of the Thing, if it

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be constantly and strongly impressed on the Mind, must produce great Awfulness and Care, not only in our *Words* and *Actions*, but our very *Thoughts*; so that a Person who lives under the *Influence* of this Belief, can no more think or design Evil, or admit of any Thought unworthy of God, or that Relation there is between *Him* and *Mankind*, or to the Injury or Prejudice of his Fellow-Creatures, than he can speak or act Things of that Tendency, well knowing that the inward Thoughts of his Heart are altogether known to Him, as well as the loudest Words, and most publick Actions.

BUT if to this Belief of the *Presence* of God with *Men*, be added a Belief of His *Care* and *Providence* over them, that He not only sees and observes their Thoughts, but directs them to such Objects as are agreeable to His Will, and out of the contrary, and that he is continually affording them His Help to embrace the one, and eschew the other; all which has been already proved from the plain and acknowledged Principles of *Providence*, and the Ideas Men must have of the *Divine Being*, as the Creator and Preserver of the World: I say, where this Belief takes Place, and an Obedience accordingly, what can there be wanting to render *Mankind* *virtuous* and *pious*, and consequently acceptable to his Maker? Must not such as are thus *influenced*, act with great Awfulness and Sincerity in every Part of their Conduct, keep the strictest Watch over their Minds, that they may be rightly directed in the Way of their Duty? And when they are so directed, what great Encouragement have they to set about practising accordingly, having the Help of an *All-wise* and *Almighty Being* present with them, to assist them in their so doing? The great Advantage of such a Belief, and of a Conduct agreeable thereto may be farther illustrated by its contrary: Is it not evident to any serious Observer of Things,

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that the *great Source*, from whence springs that Flood of Wickedness, and those unaccountable Practices, unworthy of *rational Creatures*, so common among Mankind, is derived from their disregarding, neglecting or casting from them, the Thoughts of His *Presence* with them ; the *Vulgar*, too many of them, looking on the *Divine Being* as something at a great Distance, confined to the *Heavens* above, from whence by an easy Transition, 'tis natural for them to suppose, that they can hide themselves from His Notice, the latter having in it nothing more absurd than the former ; and where ever this is the Case, what hinders them from doing any Thing the most wicked and abominable, that their vile Lusts may prompt them to ?

AND tho' others, who have accustomed themselves to a more refined Way of Thinking, (as they suppose) cannot deny His *Omnipresence* ; and some of them are pleased to acknowledge in general Terms, that He concerns Himself in *humane Affairs*, yet when their Scheme is sifted to the Bottom, it will appear to be only Words without Meaning ; for at the same Time they tell us, that the Use of those Faculties, by which *Men* are distinguished from *Brutes*, is the only Means they have to discern whether there is a *God*, and whether He concerns Himself with *humane Affairs*, or has given any *Laws*, and what those *Laws* are ; or in other Words, that God has given *Mankind* no other Means, by which they might know what He wills them to know, believe and practice, but the Use of *Reason*, *Humane Reason*, &c. This then according to them, is the only Principle of *Knowledge*, and the same they tell us, is the only Principle of *Action*, for they deny that there is any Principle of *Action* distinct from it, and assert that *Reason*, however fallible it may be, is all *rational Creatures* have to trust to. Upon which I observe, if this be the Case, how does



does God concern Himself with *humane Affairs* to any good or profitable Purpose? If He does not *influence* their Minds, then all His Concern is for their Bodies, which to affirm, is most unworthy of God, to imagine that He takes Care of the Body only, the earthly, material Part of us, form'd of the like Materials with the Bodies of other *Animals*, and neglects the *Soul*, by which chiefly *Mankind* are distinguished from them, and superior to them; and yet this is the necessary Consequence of these *Modern Schemes*: For if he does not *influence* them as to their Knowledge or Practice, as they affirm, this being all the *Influence* which serves to any good End or Purpose, therefore, as I said, for them to tell us, that God concerns Himself with *humane Affairs*, are Words without a Meaning; for He does not upon their Principles, concern Himself at all with them, but leaves them intirely to themselves, which deprives *Mankind* of the most certain Ground of *Knowledge*, and Stability in *Practice*, respecting their *Religious* and *Moral Conduct*.

I expect it will be now enquired, *If God, as hath been asserted, does concern Himself with humane Affairs, by influencing the Minds of Men, respecting both their Understanding and Practice, by some Principle of Knowledge and Action, distinct from their Rational Faculty, how, or after what Manner does He influence them? And by what Means may this Principle, when it operates, be distinguished from the ordinary Operations of our Natural Faculties?*

THE Solution of this Enquiry I take to be necessary, before we come to the Application of this whole Argument to the *Christian Religion*; and the more seasonable at this Time, because a late \* Author has been pleas'd to treat the Thing as unintelligible,

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\* *Christianity as old as the Creation*, pag. 183. &c.

telligible, and a whole Society of Religious People for its Sake, with some Contempt; but to say nothing of the People, if the Thing be established, the Contempt, cast upon them for its Sake, is effectually removed.

It may therefore be enquired on this Occasion, first, *How is it to be conceived as a Thing possible that there should be two distinct Principles of Knowledge and Action, the one Humane, and the other Divine, in the same Person? Will not the one destroy the other, or at least suspend the Exercise of it for a Time, so that whilst we are under the Influence of a Divine Principle, our Natural Understanding is laid aside or suspended, and when we are in the Exercise of our Natural Understandings, we have then so far, nothing to do with the Divine Principle?*

If this be the Case, as the above Writer has suggested, Men destitute of all *Reason* were as capable of knowing all Matters of Religion, as if they had been ever so *rational*: Which would indeed be an undeniable Consequence, if the *Divine Principle* contended for, did operate on Men as *meer Machines* or *bruit Animals*. But none in their Senses ever asserted that, but on the contrary, that it operates on them as *rational Creatures*; and therefore to say, that Men destitute of all *Reason*, can know any thing at all, much less all Matters of Religion, by the Help of any Principle whatever, is to say, that Men act *rationally* without *Reason*, and know without a Capacity of *Knowledge*; a Solecism which one would not expect from so great an Advocate for *Reason*.

BUT to come directly to the Point, it is so far from being inconceivable, that there should be two Principles of *Knowledge* and *Action* (as before) in the same Person, that it is easy to conceive, inasmuch as it is supposed, that the *Divine Principle* does not act in Contradiction, or inconsistency, to *Right Reason*,

*Reason*, (and consequently so far as *Mankind* are endued with it, and act agreeable to it, it acts in perfect Harmony therewith) for it is impossible that the *Divine Principle* should direct any Thing, or move to any Action, which is not perfectly agreeable thereto ; but it being evident, that our Faculties as Men, are, or, as the late mentioned Author acknowledges, may be fallible and uncertain ; the End of the *Divine Principle's* operating on the Mind of *Man*, is to correct the Errors of it, to be an *Assistant* to our Faculties, that they do not err from Truth and Rectitude, either in Understanding or Practice : To say that this is destroying my Understanding, or is inconsistent with it, or impairs it in any Respect, is full as absurd as to say, that if a Person well versed in any *Art* or *Science* of which I am ignorant, should carefully instruct me in the *Principles* or *Practices* of it, that this Person in so doing, impairs my Understanding, which is so far from being so, that he improves and enlarges it : Or can I be said, when attending to his Instructions, to lay aside my Understanding ? Or am I as capable, without any *Reason* or *Understanding* at all, to apprehend what he teaches as if I were ever so *rational* ? No Man in his Senses will say so ; and yet this Absurdity, as great as it is, is justly chargeable on this great Pretender to *Reason*.

BUT he goes on, " 'Tis strange that all Mankind should have a Principle of acting, of which they never were sensible, nor can these *Modern Discoverers* tell them what it is, or how it operates." But why *Modern Discoverers* ? If this Author has read his *Bible* with any other Design then to find Faults in it, he must be convinced, that it is so far from being a *Modern Discovery*, that it is as old as *Mankind*, and from the Nature of the Thing, that it is as extensive as *Humane Race* : The Spirit of God striving with Man universally before the



the *Flood*, as well as after, not only among the People of *Israel*, to whom besides outward *Laws* and *Statutes*, He gave His good Spirit to instruct them, tho' many of them rebelled against it; but also among the *Gentiles*, in whose Writings there are clear Hints of a *Divine Principle*, under different Names, distinct from *Humane Reason*, instructing Mankind; so that 'tis far from being a *modern Discovery*.

BUT to return to the Question, *How does it operate?* Does it operate as a Medium incognitum assentiendi, in a Manner we know not how? Or does it operate in a Manner well known? Certainly not the first, for how can a Principle which is in it self unknown, be the Ground of Knowledge? How can that which is uncertain produce Certainty? It must therefore be concluded, that as it comes from God, it brings with it an Evidence of its *Divine Original*, which consists in this, that it operates agreeable to the *Divine Nature*, i. e. as God is Goodness and Truth, and Purity in Perfection, so this leads to all these, and in Order to it, bears a constant Testimony in the Secret of all Hearts, against Evil in every Appearance of it, though never so secretly contrived or committed; the most secret inmost Thoughts of the Heart being laid open and brought to Light by it, and the State of the Mind discovered to it self, as plainly as Face is discovered to Face in a Glass; so that he that would turn from it, cannot by all his false Reasonings escape its Notice, but as often as he acts contrary to these plain Discoveries, must confess, that he condemns himself in the Thing which he allows: And this is the State of all *vitious Persons*, remaining such, till by frequent Repetition, and long Continuance in Rebellion, it pleases God to withhold those secret kind Discoveries from them, and leave them to themselves, and then, (though from the Consideration

ration of the great Benignity and Long-Suffering of God, I believe that does not often befall Mankind in this Life) but when it is so, such, though they retain their natural Understandings in other Respects, yet they lose them as to the Sense of Evil which they before had ; which is a plain Distinction between an *Understanding* received from God, and an *Understanding* meerly humane, the one plainly subsisting without the other.

BUT this is not all the *Evidence* of its *Divine Original*, which this Principle brings along with it ; for as it constantly bears Testimony against the very last Appearance of *Evil*, so it leads the Mind by Degrees, into a State of *unspotted Purity* and *Holiness*, agreeable to its own pure Nature, discovering to it, not only Actions and Things which are good, but searching to the Bottom, and bringing to Light the secret Springs and Motives of all Actions ; so that whatever a Person does, thus *influenced*, he does in Truth and Sincerity, with an upright Heart, as unto God ; such an one, not only abstaining from practising *Evil*, but abhorring and detesting it, not only practising *Good* in such particular Instances as fall in his Way, but loving and delighting in it : In short, it is the *Perfection* of *Goodness* and *Virtue* it points at, and leads to, which evidences that it comes from God ; and though Men sincerely engaged in the Pursuit of this excellent Attainment do not presently arrive unto it, yet when they are once entred in the Way to it, and have made some successful Advances therein, by a sincere humble Application in Heart and Spirit unto God, for his *Divine Aid* and *Assistance*, they are encouraged to proceed in the same Manner, and in their so doing, meet with farther Advances in the Way of *Virtue*, which is a solid Ground of farther Encouragement for them to persevere in it to the End.

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AND this I take to be the most reasonable, as well as most effectual Means for the producing a *religious, virtuous Conduct* in Life, universally among Mankind. For as it is most agreeable to the *Perfections* of the *Divine Nature*, to suppose that He made Mankind Originally good, and consequently, that what *Evil* there is among Men, they themselves are the Authors of it : So I appeal to the Judgment of all unprejudic'd Advocates for *Reason*, which of the two is most *rational*, *That Man who has marr'd that goodly Image of Virtue and Rectitude, in which he was created, should restore himself into it, by his own Understanding, Power and Ability*, (the wrong Applications of these being the Cause of his Defection into *Evil*.) Or, *that the Great and Good God, who made Man good, should restore him again into it, by interposing with His Divine Aid and Assistance*. I think it may be said, *Res ipsa loquitur*, the Matter speaks for it self.

I add, the Evidence of this *Divine Principle*, from the Manner of its Operation, *viz.* that as it discovers *Evil* in the Root and Conception of it, and *Virtue* in the secret Springs and Motives to it, so it does this in such a lively and vigorous Manner, as gives Strength to all the Faculties of the Mind, in those who attend unto it, to obey its Precepts, and effectually fortifies them against all Temptations and Provocations to the contrary : That it does all this with an Evidence and Perspicuity, which exceeds what generally accompanies the ordinary Operations of the *rational Faculties* without this *Assistance* ; that it often brings before our Minds certain Truths relating to our present Duty, and future Happiness, when we least of all think of them, or are solicitous about them, that it sometimes discovers Things, which we never before thought of, in such a clear Light, that what was before hidden from us, at once becomes easy and familiar to us ;  
and



and lastly, that in our Obedience to this *inward Law*, we enjoy such solid Peace, and strong Consolation in Spirit, that (though it has a reasonable Ground and Foundation which we can easily account for, and in that Respect, is plainly distinguishable from *Enthusiasm* in the worst Sense of the Word) the Enjoyment of it cannot be describ'd by Words, being above even our Understandings, and much more any Expressions : Agreeable to which, the Scriptures speak of the *Peace of God as passing all Understanding, and the Love of Christ passing Knowledge, that it hath not entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the good Things which God has in Store for them that love Him* ; and yet that God, says the same Apostle, *hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit*. The Sense of which is a comfortable Foretaste or Earnest, of that future Inheritance which all good Men are in the full Hope, and Expectation of, and are a good Evidence of it ; that as God gives them at Times some Enjoyment of it, and raises at other Times, strong Appetites and Desires after it in a greater Measure, so they are in the firm Belief, that these Appetites are not given them in vain, but that what is wanting in this Life of the full Fruition of that which they are now thirsting after, they shall enjoy in complete Fulness, in that Life, which is to come.

I have been thus particular in explaining this *Principle*, because the Author last quoted has been pleas'd to say, *that these modern Discoverers cannot tell what it is, or how it operates*. I hope I have by this Time told both, and he himself had sufficient Opportunity to know, that the *People* he there mentions, always profess'd it to be a *Divine Principle*, which they call by divers Names, as the *Spirit of God, the Word of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Grace of God, the Light of Christ, &c.* by which Names the Pen-Men of the *Holy Scriptures* also call it ; and as this is

So, I would recommend it to him in the most serious Manner, to consider how he can clear himself from the Imputation of *Blasphemy*, in calling it first, a *Senseless Notion*, and which is yet worse, *One of their ugliest Brats*. Certainly a more decent Word might have been expected from him, even in a reverend Regard to a *Divine Principle*, though he thought the *People* pretending to it were mistaken; and after all, I must take the Liberty to tell him, that what he is pleas'd to call a *Senseless Notion*, and *ugliest Bratt*, is, and will be, the principal Obstacle in the Way of his *darling Notion*, and what, I doubt not, will sooner or later disperse those Fogs, which Men of corrupt Minds, under the Notion of more *refined Reason*, have rais'd of late in the *Christian World*: I shall only add in this Place, with Respect to this Writer, and his Performance, that whatever his Sentiments may be, 'tis impossible for him to prove that God has not given Mankind such an Help as I have been contending for; on the contrary, there are good Reasons, from the Nature of Things, to believe that He has given it. And on this Account, there is the greatest Reason for him, and all others, at least to treat the Thing with modest Caution and Decency, much less to make it the Subject of *Banter* and *Ridicule*, lest in their Oppositions against it, in the Phrase of the modest *Gamaliel*, *Haply they should be found*, (and they cannot, I say, assure themselves of the contrary) *even to fight against God*.

## C H A P. V.

Containing some farther Observations on the  
last mentioned W R I T E R.

THE Opposition which the last mentioned Writer has made to this plain Principle of Knowledge and Action, distinct from *humane Reason*, will appear yet more unaccountable, by shewing that after all he has said by Way of Ridicule upon it, and his strenuous contending for the Sufficiency of Reason, *humane Reason*, which as he says, is all rational Creatures have to trust to, in plain Contradiction to himself, he has clearly and fully asserted the Thing which he opposes, in these Words (which though expressed interrogatively, yet imply the strongest Assertion) \* “ To press this matter farther, let me ask you, Whether there is not a clear  
“ and distinct Light, that enlightens all Men, and  
“ which the Moment they attend to it, makes  
“ them perceive those Eternal Truths, which are  
“ the Foundation of all our Knowledge ; and is it  
“ not God himself who immediately illuminates  
“ them ? ”

UPON which I would observe, if by this clear and distinct Light, he means distinct from the Faculty of Reason which it enlightens, he has given up the Point, and is at once fallen into that which he elsewhere calls a *Senseless Notion*. Or if by the Word *distinct*, he means only something declaratory, and of the same import with the Word *clear*, it comes still to the same ; for as he asserts, that it

F 2

enlightens



*enlightens all Men*, (by which he must mean, if he means any Thing, that it enlightens the rational Faculty of all Men) is not that which *enlightens*, and that which is *enlightened* distinct? Is not that in Man which makes him capable to perceive, &c. and that which is made capable, two different Things? But to put the Matter out of all Doubt, If it be God Himself who *illuminates* Man, are not God and Man distinct? And if God does this immediately, He is certainly present with them for that Purpose, and if so, they have something else to trust to, besides those Faculties by which they are distinguished from *Bruits*, besides their own *Reason*, fallible as it may be.

BUT perhaps it may be alledged, that this Author does not intend by this Manner of Expression, that all our Knowledge arises from this *immediate Illumination* of God Himself, but only those Eternal Truths, which are the Foundation of our Knowledge. Well, if the *Truths* discovered by the *Illumination* of God Himself, be the Foundation of all our Knowledge, then all our Knowledge is built upon it. But to go with him to the Bottom of this Matter, their being nothing which I more desire, let us consider what he writes, pag. 180, 181, 182. First, in Order to define what he means by the Word *Reason*, he begins, " When we attribute  
 " any Operation to it, as a distinguishing between  
 " *Truth* and *Falshood*, &c. we mean by it the *ra-*  
 " *tional Faculties* ; but when we ascribe no such  
 " Operation to it, as when we give a Reason for a  
 " Thing, &c. we understand by it any Medium,  
 " by which our *rational Faculties* judge of the A-  
 " greement or Disagreement of the Terms of any  
 " Proposition. And if an Author writes intelligi-  
 " bly, we may easily discern, in which of these  
 " two Senses he takes the Word. But to go to  
 " the Bottom of this Matter, it will be requisite  
 " to

“ to give a more distinct Account of *Reason* in  
 “ both these Senses.

“ By the *rational Faculties*, says he, we mean  
 “ the *natural Ability* a Man has, to apprehend,  
 “ judge and infer, the immediate Objects of which  
 “ *Faculties* are not the Things themselves, but the  
 “ Ideas the Mind conceives of them; while our  
 “ Ideas remain single, they fall under the Ap-  
 “ prehension, and are expressed by simple Terms;  
 “ when joyn'd, under the Judgment, and expressed  
 “ by Propositions; when so joyn'd as to need the  
 “ Intervention of some other Idea to compare them  
 “ with, in Order to form a Judgment, they become  
 “ by that Intervention the Subject of *Inference* or  
 “ *Argumentation*, and this is term'd *Syllogism* or  
 “ *Argument*. It must be observ'd too, that all the  
 “ Ideas we have or can have, are either by *Sensa-*  
 “ *tion* or *Reflection*, by the first, we have our Ideas  
 “ of what passes or exists without; by the second,  
 “ of what passes or exists within the Mind, and in  
 “ the View or Contemplation of these, consists all  
 “ our Knowledge, that being nothing but the Per-  
 “ ception of the Agreement or Disagreement of  
 “ our Ideas. Any two of these when joyn'd toge-  
 “ ther, so as to be affirm'd or denied of each other,  
 “ make what we call a *Proposition*; when considered  
 “ apart, what we call the Terms of that *Proposition*,  
 “ the Agreement or Disagreement of which Terms,  
 “ being expressed by the rightly affirming or deny-  
 “ ing them of each other, is what we call *Truth*; the  
 “ Perception of their Agreement or Disagreement,  
 “ is what we term *Knowledge*; this Knowledge ac-  
 “ crues either immediately on the bare Institution  
 “ of these two Ideas, or Terms so joyn'd, and is  
 “ therefore stiled *Intuitive Knowledge*, or *Self-*  
 “ *evident Truth*; or by the Intervention of some  
 “ other Idea or Ideas, as a *common Measure* for the  
 “ other two, and is therefore called the *Medium*,  
 “ by which *Reason* judges of their Agreement or  
 Disagree-

“ Disagreement, and this is called *Demonstrative*  
 “ *Knowledge*, which is never to be had without the  
 “ Help of the other, for if there were not some  
 “ Propositions, which need not to be proved, it  
 “ would be in vain for Men to argue with one  
 “ another, because they then could bring no  
 “ Proofs but what needed to be proved. Those  
 “ Propositions which need no Proof, we call *Self-*  
 “ *evident*, because by comparing the Ideas signi-  
 “ fied by the Terms of such Propositions, we im-  
 “ mediately discern their Agreement or Disagree-  
 “ ment ; this is, as I said before, what we call *In-*  
 “ *tuitive Knowledge*, and is the Knowledge of God  
 “ Himself, who sees all Things by *Intuition*, and  
 “ may I think be called *Divine Inspiration*, as be-  
 “ ing, immediately from God, and not acquired  
 “ by any humane Deduction or drawing of Conse-  
 “ quences. This certainly is that *Divine*, that  
 “ *Uniform Light*, which shines in the *Minds of all*  
 “ *Men*, and enables them to discern whatever they  
 “ do discern, since without it their could be no  
 “ Demonstration, no Knowledge, but invincible  
 “ Obscurity and universal Uncertainty.”

I have quoted him thus at large, because I would  
 not be thought to wrong his Sense. And by this  
 Time it clearly appears, what he means pag. 11.  
 by those *Eternal Truths* which are the Foundation  
 of all our Knowledge, viz. *Self-evident Proposi-*  
*tions* ; the Knowledge of which he calls *Divine In-*  
*spiration*, as coming immediately from God Him-  
 self, and is the Foundation of all our Knowledge :  
 But he does not allow, that the Knowledge built on  
 this Foundation is *divine*, & comes immediately from  
 God Himself, but is acquired by humane Deducti-  
 ons, and drawing of Consequences. So that ac-  
 cording to him, God lays the Foundation, and af-  
 fords the Materials of Knowledge, and Men build  
 upon that Foundation, and with those Materials ;



for tho' these Propositions, and the simple Ideas of which they are compounded, are *self-evident*, yet their Agreement or Disagreement with others is not, or may not be so, but must be found out by our own Study and Application of Thought, by the Use of our *Reason*, fallible as it may be.

To apply all this to the Knowledge of *Religious Matters*, it must be allowed, that there are *self-evident Truths* of that Sort, the Perception of which our Author acknowledges, may be called *Divine Inspiration*, as being immediately from God Himself; but the Perception of other Truths, or Propositions depending on these, which arise from the Agreement of these with other Ideas or Propositions, he says, is acquired by humane Deduction, or drawing of Consequences, which are, according to him, not from God immediately, but become known to us by the Mediation of these *self-evident Notions* or *Propositions*. Now, I would appeal to the Judgment of any impartial Person, who is not resolved at all Adventures to support a Scheme supposing as he has asserted, that these *self-evident Notions* or *Propositions* come immediately from God, whether it is not most reasonable to believe, That the Knowledge of other Truths or Propositions, which depend on their Agreement with these, are also from Him. For is it not reasonable, that the *Divine Being* should interpose there, where His Interposition is most wanted, and were without it, we are in most Danger of being deceived? I believe every impartial Person will allow this. And is not this the Case in the more *complex Notions*, and *compounded Propositions*, arising from several of these simple plain Truths interwoven with others not so obvious to our Understandings? 'Tis here the only Difficulty lies, and consequently in these we want Help, and are in Danger of being deceived our selves, and deceiving others, viz. In the

the Application of these plain Rules or Measures to the Actions of Life, where there are great Variety of Cases and Circumstances, not easily perceivable at all Times, as to their Agreement or Disagreement with these *self-evident Rules and Measures*.

For Instance, it is a self-evident Truth, *that I ought to render to every Man his Due, that I ought not to abuse my Body with Lust, or any other Intemperance, &c.* But when these Rules come to be applied as Measures to our particular Actions, there is a Danger from the Prevalency of Temptations, and the Strength of our Appetites, confirm'd by long Custom and Habit, lest we should deviate from them in those Particulars, if left to our selves; and therefore, there is then the greatest Need of a Divine Monitor, to bring to our Remembrance those Rules of *Temperance and Justice*, and shew us their Agreement or Disagreement with the Action under present Consideration, and excite us to Act or forbear acting accordingly. I say, this is evidently most worthy of God, and for want of regarding this, many wise Men, who have had right Notions of *Virtue and Vice* in general, have failed in acting agreeable thereto in particular Cases. So that it appears evident to me, that the *immediate Interposition* of the *Divine Being* is necessary in these Cases, in Order to shew the agreeableness of these Rules to every particular Action or Circumstance; and fix our Minds in their attending to them, which without it, are in Danger of wandering from them, or being partial in Favour of some prevailing beloved Lust or Passion.

Which this Author himself, in Contradiction to what he had before advanced, of humane Deductions, &c. confesses in Effect pag. 184. *Were it not for these self-evident Notions, which are the Foundation of all our Reasonings, there could be no intellectual Communication*

*Communication between God and Man, nor, as we are framed, can God ascertain us of any Truth, but by shewing its Agreement with those self-evident Notions, which are the Tests by which we are to judge of every Thing, even the Being of a God, and Natural Religion, which though not knowable by Intuition, are to be demonstrated by such Proofs which have mediately or immediately a necessary Connexion with our self-evident Notions.*

HERE is first an *Intellectual Communication* between God and Man supposed, (which by the by, must be between two, otherwise 'tis no Communication) by the Means of these *self-evident Notions*, which come immediately from God: And not only so, but he also ascertains the Truth of Propositions not self-evident, by shewing their Agreement with these self-evident Notions; so that all our Knowledge, by his own Confession, comes from God. For it all consists, either in our Perception of these self-evident Propositions, or their Connexion with others not so, and according to him, it is God that shews *Men* both; and therefore to carry his Notion its full Length, it is God that communicates all our Knowledge to us, not only relating to Matters of Religion, but every Thing capable of Knowledge; for instance, take any Proposition in *Euclid*, the Truth of it is found either by the Agreement of the several Terms with certain Axioms which are self-evident, or with certain Propositions already demonstrated, which in that Case are to be considered as self-evident Axioms, or with some or other of both these: But according to him, it is God that discovers immediately the Truth of these Axioms, and there Agreement with the Terms of the Propositions; and the Case is the same, let the Matter of our Knowledge be what it will. So that this Author is the greatest *Enthusiast*, or *Pretender to Inspiration*, by making



all our Knowledge, of what Kind soever, to come immediately and directly from God ; which is a plain Contradiction to the general Tendency of his Work, and a more *senseless Notion*, than any Society of People that I know were guilty of ; for the *People* he there mentions always distinguished between Things and Things, and between Knowledge and Knowledge, as the Primitive Christians also did between the Things of a *Man*, and the Things of *God*, and that the first were knowable by the *Spirit*, or *rational Faculty* of a *Man*, and the last knowable by the *Spirit of God*.

THERE seems to be one Difficulty yet remaining, which I would endeavour to remove in this Place, for the applying this whole Argument to the *Christian Religion* with more Clearness, which is this, allowing all that has been said, that there is a *Divine Principle* which discovers to *Men* their *Duty*, and excites and helps them to the Performance of it, yet as it operates on them as *rational Creatures*, the Faculty of *Reason* is that alone which judges of it, as to the Truths in Speculation, and the Nature and Obligation of those Precepts or Rules of Action which it discovers to it : So that *Reason* is that in which all centers ultimately, and is therefore what we must have Recourse to for Certainty, whether what comes before our Minds, are the Dictates of a *Divine Principle*, or the Result of our own Thinking ; and if so, is not *Reason* the *Criterion* by which we judge of their Truth, and consequently the *Superior*, or rather only Ground of *Certainty* ?

I hope I have done this *Objection* Justice ; I am sure I would do so, for there is nothing which I more desire, than to sift this most necessary Affair to the Bottom, by putting it in the clearest Light 'tis capable of.

FOR *Answer*, I say first, that to compare the *Divine Principle* with *humane Reason*, as to Superiority or Predecency, is to compare Things which ought not to be compared; for without Doubt, a *Divine Principle* (supposing there is such a Thing) is infinitely superior to any *Faculty meerly humane*, in the Nature of the Thing. This will farther appear by considering the different Operations of the one, and the other Principle, for though it is asserted (and I hope rationally proved according to the Nature of Things) that there is a *Divine Principle* in *Man*, to instruct and assist him in Matters of *Religion*, yet 'tis plain that this *Principle*, and the *Faculty of Reason* operate differently, the one as an *Instructor*, the other as the *Instructed*; the one as a *Teacher*, the other as a *Learner*; accordingly God is said in Holy Scripture, *to Teach the Humble of His Ways, and to guide the Meek in Judgment, and to shew unto Man what his Thoughts are*: All which necessarily imply both a Diversity of Principles, and different Manner of Operations; and yet not so different as to act separately, but jointly, the one under the Direction and Assistance of the other. And this is so plainly the Truth of the Case, that 'tis impossible it should be otherwise, for as the *Understanding*, or *rational Faculty of Man*, being a limited, fallible Principle, cannot know certainly the Things of God, or *Religious Matters*, (it being evident, that all the most absurd Idolatries and vain Superstitions among the *Heathens*, as well as many absurd Doctrines and Practices among *Christians*, have sprung from this Root when left to it self) so the *Divine Principle* cannot instruct Mankind in those Things, but as it acts upon the *Understanding* or *rational Faculty*; for *brute Animals*, remaining such, are not in their Natures capable of any such Instruction: So that it is the *Divine Principle* that presents Objects to our Under-

standings, assists and enlarges the Understanding, to apprehend them, but the Understanding as a meer *humane Faculty*, is not therefore a Judge of the Truth and Certainty of what the *Divine Principle* discovers, as a Faculty superior to it, because it derives its Certainty from the *Divine Principle*, which is therefore the principal Ground of Certainty, and not subject to the Judgment of any other. *Humane Reason*, or any Faculty meerly *humane*, is a weak, fallible, uncertain Principle; but the Faculty of *Reason* considered in its self, *Right Reason*, which is another Word for *Truth*, is certain and unchangable, being an Emanation from God Himself, a Gift given by Him to correct the Errors, and supply the Defects, and strengthen the Weaknesses of our Faculties. In short, there must be a Ground of *Certainty* some where, or else all centers in *Scepticism*, (which is a miserable State of Things, unworthy to suppose the God of Knowledge and Wisdom should be the Author of) and whoever look into themselves, and observe the Weakness of their own Faculties, will not place it there: Where then may we Place it, but in Him who is the *Author* of our *Being*, and of all the Faculties and Powers of *Body* and *Mind*? Who so fit to inform the Judgment, rectify the Understanding, and strengthen the Will, as He that formed them? Who so fit to *search the Heart* and *try the Reins*, as He that made the Heart, and gave *Mankind* all the Capacity he has of Knowledge and Action, and every Thing leading and appertaining thereto? And to say, that the Discovery which God makes to the Mind, and the Helps which He affords them, are subject to our Understandings, as to a more sure Touchstone or Rule of *Truth*, is to make the  *Creature* wiser than the *Creator*, to set the *Learner* above his *Teacher*, which though sometimes it may be the Case between mortal Men, *viz.* that a Person by Reason



Reason of a larger Capacity, or a greater Application and Study, may in Time exceed his Instructor; and those who are under the Influence of a *Divine Instruction*, may become wiser than their *Teachers*, as the *Psalmist* declares, *Psal.* cxix, 98, 99, 100. Yet this can never be the Case between a *Creature*, however qualified, and his *Creator*; it is so far from it, that the more any know of God, and their Duty to Him in the Way of His Teaching, the more they become sensible of the Shortness of their own Capacities, and the Greatness of the *Divine Wisdom, Power and Goodness*, which leads them to humble, modest Thoughts of themselves, in which State, they are still more in the Way to receive *Instruction and Help* from Him in all Things necessary for their present and future Happiness. So that their whole Life is one continued State of humble Dependence on Him for *Wisdom and Strength*; first to know, what the good and acceptable Will of God is, and then to do the same.

AND this modest, humble depending State of Mind, join'd with a certain clear Evidence of the *Truth*, which always accompanies it, is what distinguishes to a Mind rightly dispos'd, the *Teaching* of God, from that which arises from the ordinary Exercise of our own Faculties without that *Help*, which being the Effect of our own Labour of Mind, the Product of our own Study and Application, the Person who is enriched in Knowledge this Way, (as he supposes) is apt to value himself upon it: Knowledge thus acquired in its Nature is apt to puff up, but Charity, Love to God and Man, which is the principal Thing which God teaches, edifies the Person exercis'd therein, builds him up in a godly, virtuous, religious Life, which is the End of all *Religion*.

By

By this Time, I hope enough has been said to convince those who are honestly disposed to give the Argument its due weight, that God has given, and continues to give to *Mankind* a *Divine Aid*, for knowing and practising what is agreeable to His Will, and consequently tends to their present and future Happiness. It remains now to apply this whole Argument to the *Christian Religion*, and consider how far the Truth of it is confirm'd and established by the Belief of this Principle, which shall be the Subject of the next Chapter.

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## C H A P. VI.

*The Arguments in the foregoing Part, applied to the Christian Religion.*

**H**AVING in the foregoing Pages, endeavour'd to prove the Necessity and Usefulness of a *Divine Aid*, as a Principle of *Knowledge* and *Action* in Matters of Religion, distinct from *humane Reason*, it remains now to apply this Doctrine to the *Christian Religion*, and to consider how far it may reasonably be supposed to influence our Minds to the Belief and Practice of its Doctrines and Precepts. In Order to which, let it be considered in the first Place, what it is reasonable to suppose a *Man* in the firm Belief of such a Principle has to do. It is obvious to suppose, that a Person in this Belief, if he acts consistent with it, will in all his religious Conduct, proceed upon a Bottom of Faith towards God; that is, as by considering the perfect Purity of the *Divine Being*, he must be sensible, that without Holiness he cannot be acceptable to Him, and by taking a Survey of the Shortness and Feebleness of his own Powers and Faculties, that he is not of himself capable to attain to that State, and preserve himself

himself in it ; this leads him directly to apply by *Faith* for *Help* where alone it is to be had, that is, unto *God*, who is all-sufficient, and as such, able to supply all Defects of our Understandings, and regulate our Wills and Affections, and all the Powers and Faculties of our Minds, and bring them into a Conformity to his Will, and preserve them in it.

Now this is to be a *Christian*, for such an one believes in a *Divine Principle* given of *God*, for the Ends proposed by the *Christian Religion*, or by *Christ* the *Author* of it, call it the *Grace of God*, the *Spirit of God*, the *Word of God*, the *Light of Christ*, or by any other Name, it matters not, provided its Sufficiency for this great End be firmly believed : Which Principle was promised in the fullest and clearest Terms to the Believers in *Christ*, as an Effect and Consequence of his Coming in the *Flesh* ; and was soon after his *Resurrection* in an eminent Manner given and dispensed to His Disciples and Followers, and continued with them, helping them to preach the *Gospel*, and opening the Understandings of those who were honestly disposed thereto, to receive and believe it, and influencing their Hearts and Affections, to live according to its pure Precepts ; and this not only to the Believers of that Generation, but to be with them to all future Generations, or in the Words of *Christ*, *to abide with them for ever*.

To apply the Reasonings in the former Chapters more particularly to the *Christian Religion*, as it has been already proved from the pure Nature of the *Divine Being*, that *Mankind*, in order to his Acceptance with Him, should be *Holy*, free from all Defilement, &c. so the Precepts of the *Christian Religion* require *Holiness* in this extensive Sense, as *Mat. v. 48. Be ye perfect as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* 1 *Pet. i. 15, 16. Again, As He*  
that



that bath called you is Holy, so be ye Holy in all Manner of Conversation. Again, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having these Promises, Dearly Beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* Again, 1 Thess. v. 22, 23. *Abstain from all Appearance of Evil, and the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, may be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus.* These Texts need no Comment, but plainly imply, that God requires of *Christians*, that they should be free from Evil in every Appearance and Degree of it; and that they should be simply and altogether *Sincere, Righteous, and Holy, &c.*

On the other Hand, it has been proved, from the limited finite Nature of our Faculties as *Creatures*, that we cannot certainly bring our selves into this State, or preserve our selves in it, without continual Danger of falling, as in Fact all *Mankind* have fallen, and a great Part of them do err from it daily, and therefore there is Need of the *Interposition* of an Infinite, Unlimited Power, for their Help and Preservation. Now both these the *Christian Religion* fully declares, viz. *The Weakness or Impotency of Man for this Work, and the Power and Sufficiency of the Grace or Spirit of God, as a Gift given by him for this great End, to strengthen their Weakness, and supply their Defects of every Kind.*

As to the first, Christ Himself expressly asserts it, Joh. xv. 5. *Without me you can do nothing*, and the Apostolick Writers speak of it rather as a thing supposed and taken for granted, than to be proved, Rom. v. 6. *When we were yet without Strength*, says the Apostle, *Christ died for the Ungodly.* And elsewhere speaking of the Believers in their unconverted State, he expresses himself in Terms which necessarily imply the greatest *Weakness or Incapacity*, as  
that

that *they were dead in Trespasses and Sins*, that they were once *Darkness*; and in short, the whole Design and Oeconomy of the *Christian Religion* is built upon this Supposition, and it was for this End chiefly, that Christ came, that he died and rose again, and gave the Gift of His *Holy Spirit*, that He might thereby lay a firm Foundation of Faith in His *Power* and *All-Sufficiency*, for the destroying the Works of the Devil, for purifying and sanctifying the Hearts of *Men*, which were defiled, which they were not able to do of themselves.

And that which gave the greatest Confirmation to the Truth of the whole, was that this *Help* was not only promised and given, but also had its effectual Work in those who received the Truth of the Gospel in the Love of it; their Hearts, upon receiving the *Spirit of Christ*, became purified by Faith; those who had been eminently wicked as *Fornicators, Idolaters, Drunkards, Extortioners, &c.* became washed, sanctified and justified, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of God. *We our selves*, says the Apostle, *were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, but after that the Kindness and Love of God our Saviour towards Man appeared, not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but according to His Mercy he saved us by the Washing of Regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* I might cite many more Texts to the same Effect, but having more particularly insisted on this Part of the Argument, in my first Part, I shall forbear, only thus much I thought necessary, in order to shew, that the great Design of the *Christian Religion* was to reform *Mankind* by a *Divine Principle* given for that End, which being received by Faith, did that Work fully and effectually; and that it was something distinct from the ordinary

Faculties of the Mind, being said to be *given to them*, to be *shed on them abundantly*, and that to strengthen and improve our natural Faculties, to enlighten the Eyes of our Understanding, and quicken and enliven our Wills and Affections, all which I have already proved to be agreeable to the finite limited Nature of our Faculties considered in themselves, and the absolute Purity of the *Divine Being*, and the Relation there is between God as an *All-wise, Powerful Creator*, and Man as a *feeble fallible Creature*.

So that the *Christian Religion*, though in the Manner of its Publication and Introduction into the World, it was uncommon and extraordinary; yet in the great End and Design of it, and the Means of attaining that End, it appears to be most reasonable, and agreeable to those Notions which an *intelligent rational Creature* must have of the blessed Author of his Being. And as to those extraordinary Facts and Circumstances, which preceded and attended the first Publication of the Gospel, such as the working of *Miracles*, and especially that greatest of all, the *Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead*, and the Effusion of the *Holy Spirit* which followed upon it; they were evidently directed to this End, *to wit*, to be a Foundation of Faith in His Power, who was the *Author* of all, for the bringing about the necessary Works of *Repentance, Amendment of Life, and Perseverance in a State of Holiness*. And the Apostles argued from these extraordinary Acts of the Divine Power, by way of Analogy, to the Act of the same Power, exerted for the bringing about these Ends, particularly that of the *Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead*, as *Rom. vi. ver. 1, to 11. and chap. viii. ver. 10, 11. and in his Epistle to the Ephesians, from Chap i. ver. 13. to Chap. ii. ver. 10. from all which, and many other Passages of the like Tendency, he that*  
reads



reads the Apostolick Writings with Attention may observe, that the Apostle argues by Way of Confirmation and of Encouragement to the Believers, that they should set about the Work of *Sanctification*, and renewing of the Mind into a State of *Holiness*, with a good Assurance of Success, because He that has called them unto this Work, is all-powerful, and therefore able to assist them effectually in it, of which He has given the strongest Assurance, by raising up our Lord Jesus Christ from the Dead; having also for the same End given them the Gift of His *Holy Spirit*, as a Principle immediately operating in their Minds, to renew and sanctify them, which upon their receiving and believing in it, they also found to work powerfully and effectually for these good Ends.

THUS the *Death* and *Resurrection* of Christ, as well as His Holy unspotted Life, and the *Miracles* which He wrought, became a rational Foundation of Faith in His Power, the Power of His Spirit; and (*Vice Versâ*) having found by Experience, that by the Power of His Spirit they were renewed and sanctified in Heart and Spirit, or in the Apostle's Phrase, *their Old Man was crucified, and the Body of Sin destroyed, and they were strengthened and enabled to walk in Newness of Life*. This gave them the strongest Confirmation of the Truth of all that our Lord did and suffered for them in His own Person without them, and that He was in all Respects such as He declared Himself to be, the *Son of God*, the *Saviour of the World*, inasmuch as He had fulfilled His Promise, in giving them a new Life through His Spirit, a Life of *Holiness* and *Righteousness*, who had been *dead in Sins and Trespases*, by which they knew that he was true, in all that He had declared unto them, concerning the End and Design of His Coming, viz. *I am come*  
H 2 that

*that you may have Life, and that you may have it more abundantly.*

Now as in all this, there was nothing but what is agreeable to the Reason of Things, and the Relation there is between *God* and *Man* as *Creator* and *Creature*, as hath been already proved, there is good Reason to believe the Truth of the whole; and that, as it is reasonable to believe, that God who made Man an *intelligent Creature*, but yet of limited Faculties, and as such, liable to Errors and Failures, is present with him to preserve him from falling, and restore him when fallen, &c. So the *Christian Religion*, in the great End and Design of it, proposing such *Help*, and giving good Assurances of it, by those extraordinary Acts of the Divine Power, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is reasonable to believe, that He came from God, and was what He declared Himself to be.

AND in this Sense, *Christianity* may be said to be as old as the *Creation*, inasmuch as ever since the *Creation*, there was Need of that *Help*, and such *Help* was given, or at least offered to *Mankind*, and that therefore the Gospel is a Re-publication, not of the *Law*, or *Religion of Nature*, but of the *Law of Faith*, which every Man as a *Creature* (that is, a limited, finite, dependent Being) has Reason to know, if he considers his own Structure, and what a weak, feeble *Creature* he is; and yet finds in himself at Times, secret Hungrings and Thirstings after a State of Holiness, and strong Desires to be delivered from the Power of these evil Habits, to which he finds himself in Bondage, which yet he cannot find himself able to effect. This leads him directly to apply for Strength and Ability to God, who alone is compleatly and absolutely Good; and therefore may reasonably be supposed to give to Men this Sense, and these Appetites; and Almighty, and is therefore alone able to help him to fulfil them,

them, and therefore as I said, *Christianity* is in this Sense, not only *as old as the Creation*, but as extensive as *humane Race*, being founded on that immutable Relation between God and Man, as *Creator* and *Creature*, which is the same in all Men and in all Ages. So that *Christianity* may truly be called a *reasonable Institution*, as being founded on rational Principles, as to the main End and Design of it, which was the *Reformation of Mankind*. And though there are some Parts of it, which Men by their best Reason, Art or Contrivance, could never have invented, much less accomplished, and in that Sense may be said to be above *humane Reason*, or any Faculty meerly *humane*, yet there is nothing in any Part of it rightly understood, contrary to *Reason*.

FOR Instance, it is not contrary to *Reason*, that God should raise the *Dead*; it is indeed contrary to *Reason*, that one mortal Man should raise another from the *Dead*, and more so, that a *dead Person* should restore himself to *Life*: But that He that gave *Life* should restore it, has nothing in it contrary to *Reason*. And thus the Apostle *Paul* in his Defence before *Agrippa*, argues, *Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the Dead?* He does not say, *Why should it be thought incredible, that one Man should raise another from the Dead?* Or, that the *Dead* should raise themselves? For that had been very incredible; but that God should do it is easy to conceive.

AGAIN, it is not contrary to *Reason*, that God should appoint a Saviour of *Mankind*, and endue Him with all Powers and Qualifications necessary for that Work; that is, that He should be *Holy*, *Harmless*, and *Undefiled*. For it would be a vain Thing for one to pretend to save others from *Sin*, when himself was overcome by it; and that therefore he should be filled with the *Divine Spirit* and  
Power



*Power* without Measure, and in that Respect called the *Son of God* in the most eminent Manner : And that in Order to the giving a Sanction to His Doctrines and Precepts, He should be endued with the Power of working *Miracles*, which in their Nature tend to give a Sanction, and raise the Attention of Men to the Doctrines and Precepts delivered by Him.

AGAIN, it is not contrary to *Reason*, that God should permit a Person thus dignified, to be by wicked Hands *taken* and *crucified* ; for being formed as to His *Body*, of the like Materials with other Men, and consequently mortal, it is indifferent whether such a Person dies by a Natural or Violent Death.

THE latter, 'tis evident, has been in the Course of Providence, the Lot of many of the *best of Men*, and in this Case it was necessary; both in Respect of the great End and Design of His becoming a *Sacrifice* for the *Sins of Mankind*, and also to make the Evidence of his *Resurrection* the more certain and uncontestable, which the beloved Disciple *John* points at after having told us *John* xix. 34. *That one of the Soldiers with a Spear pierced His Side, and forthwith came there out Blood and Water, and he that saw it bear Record, and his Record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.* Which is in Effect to say, (in Order to obviate an Objection against His *Resurrection*, that perhaps he was not really dead, and therefore His *Resurrection* might be a Fiction or Contrivance) I know that he was really dead, because I saw His Crucifixion, and not only so, but the Violence used upon His Body even after Death was such, that had it been living, would have destroyed Life, and this I my self saw. For that 'twas himself that the Apostle meant in saying, *He that saw it bear Record, &c.* is plain from what he farther asserted, Chap. xxi. ver. 24.

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*This is the Disciple that testifieth of these Things, and wrote these Things, and we know that his Testimony is true.*

AGAIN, it is not contrary to *Reason*, that a Person sent into the World, for the Purpose of Men's Salvation, should after being *crucified, dead and buried*, be raised again from the *Dead*; this is so far from being contrary to *Reason*, that it is most reasonable. For as the principal End of Christ's Coming was to reveal to Mankind a Power by which they might overcome their *Corruptions*, and their Hearts become *purified and sanctified*: What could more effectually conduce to that End, than so convincing an Evidence of the *Divine Power* attending Him, viz. *God having raised Him from the Dead*? The *Holy Ghost* being thereupon giving as a Principle immediately acting upon the Mind for these good Purposes, there could be nothing wanting to a full Confirmation of the Truth of the whole; considering moreover, that the greatest Good and true Happiness of *Mankind*, was plainly and only designed in the *Christian Dispensation*; and therefore, though the Manner of its Publication and Introduction into the World, had something uncommon and extraordinary, yet the Thing proposed by it, which was the Reformation of *Mankind*, and the Means of attaining it, by a *Divine Principle* given of God for that End, had nothing in it but what was accountable from *Reason*, as hath been made appear in the foregoing Pages. Only such a Principle was the more likely to take Place, when revealed and published to the World, by a Person in so extraordinary Manner qualified and dignified, as our Lord was. For though a Doctrine agreeable to *Reason* in itself, as such, does often make its own Way with wise Men, duly attending to it, yet when accompanied with such extraordinary Circumstances, as the *Christian Doctrine*

was

was at its first Publication, it quickens and raises the Attention of all, and makes Men apply themselves more diligently to the Enquiry, whether these Things are so as they are declared to be : So that *Christianity* is not only in its self good and profitable to *Mankind*, but the Wisdom of God eminently appears in the Manner of its Publication to the World. For if the same pure Doctrines and rational Precepts had been only preached or published to the World, without any Solemnity or Circumstance extraordinary attending the Publication, they might perhaps have been received by some few for a Time, for their own Sake, and then dwindled into general Neglect or Oblivion : But when the *Author* of the *Christian Religion*, had such undoubted Evidences of His Divine Mission, as hath been already mentioned, this in the Nature of the Thing, bespoke the greatest Regard to them, as not only being in themselves good, but as coming directly from God ; especially when it appeared, that the first Publishers of them were so influenced by them, that of *Sinners* they became *Saints*, and those who received the Gospel, did by the Power and Virtue thereof, bring forth Fruits agreeable.

HAD the *Christian Religion* proposed any Doctrines or Precepts, to gratify *Ambition*, or *Avarice*, or *Lust*, or any other vicious Appetites in its Adherents, and had the first *Christians* appeared to be Persons pursuing Things which had such a Tendency, there might have been some Reason to suspect some wicked Contrivance in it, and that it was a Plot against *Mankind*, to enslave them to these Passions : But as nothing but their Happiness both in this World and the next, evidently appears to be aimed at therein, (I speak now of the *Christian Religion* in its original Constitution, and the only right Means proposed for the attaining of it) which



which is *Faith in God, for the Help of His Grace and good Spirit, to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, (contrary to the Evils last mentioned) and to live soberly, righteously and Godly in this present World,* which has been proved to be a rational Principle, there is the strongest Reason to receive and believe the *Christian Doctrine*, with all Humility and Thankfulness, as the greatest Blessing Mankind were ever favour'd with, and to apply our selves with all Diligence by Faith, in the Sufficiency of this *Divine Principle*, to live agreeable thereunto.

## C H A P. VII.

*The foregoing Doctrine considered with Regard to some late Controversies, particularly, that relating to Reason and Revelation.*

I Shall now consider this Doctrine of a *Divine Principle*, with Respect to some late Disputes or Controversies, which I think (with due Regard to the Labours of some Learned Men) are more easily terminated upon this Principle than any other; as first in that Question, *Whether Reason is a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, or whether Revelation is necessary to help the Weakness, and supply the Defects of Reason?*

To give a clear Solution of this important Question, it is necessary, that the Terms of it should be first explained and understood, for as both *Reason* and *Revelation* are taken in different Senses, so whenever we speak of them, we ought to declare in what Sense we intend them in the present Case. Thus by *Reason* is sometimes, and that most generally, understood the *Faculty of Reason*, or that Power which a Man hath as a *rational Creature*, of himself to apprehend, judge and compare the

Ideas of Things presented to the View of his Mind : And sometimes it is taken for the Result of that Apprehension and Judgment, or the Conclusion which the Mind forms, by the Use of that Faculty, expressed either in Word or Writing. In the first Sense, it may be called the Power of *Reasoning*, and in the latter, the Act of it.

AGAIN, by *Revelation* is sometimes understood, the immediate Presentation of something to the Mind of Man, relating to the Will of God, and his Duty accordingly, and fixing the Mind in its Attention thereunto, in the right believing and practising of which, his present and future Happiness consists, which may be term'd *Inward and Immediate Revelation* ; and this I take to be the most proper Sense of the Word, and what is generally meant by it, when used in the Holy Scriptures of the *New Testament*, (for I do not at present meddle with the several Ways of Revelation mentioned in the *Old Testament*) but there is an other Meaning of it, which has very much obtain'd of late, which is *the Declaration of the Mind of God committed to Writing, and contained in the Holy Scriptures*. This is what is generally meant by the Word *Revelation*, by the Writers of both Sides of the Question, tho' improperly, for I do not Remember any where in the Scriptures, to find the Word used in that Sense ; on the contrary, the *Spirit of God*, which is the *Divine Principle* I have been contending for, is called the *Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation* ; the Eyes of the Understanding being thereby enlightned, which must be *Revelation* in the first Sense of the Word. However, as it has been of late, and that most generally, used in the latter Sense, I shall sometimes use it in that Sense ; but having distinguished both *Reason* and *Revelation* into two Senses, or Meanings of those Words, that I may be the more clearly understood, when I use either of these

Terms

Terms, I shall distinguished every where in which of these two Senses I use them.

I say then, that *Reason*, in the first Sense of the Word, is not a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion ; for as a Faculty it is but a meer Power, acting nothing, and therefore, can be a Guide in nothing, much less in so weighty an Affair as that of *Religion*. The Question then will recur, *Whether Reason* (as Mankind are endued with it, and which distinguishes them from *Brutes*) *employd or exercised about Matters of Religion, or Divine Things, is of it self a sufficient Guide in these Matters, without any other Help or Assistance?* I think not : I have before proved that *Reason* in this Sense, is a limited finite Principle, and as such, liable to err in Matters of *Knowledge*, and fail in Matters of *Practice*. But any Principle of *Knowledge* and *Action*, which is in it self liable to Errors and Failure, is not a sufficient Guide in Matters of *Religion* ; for that which instructs in these Matters ought to do it with Certainty ; and that which assists the Mind in Practice ought to do it effectually, and in such a Manner as certainly to be depended upon : But this cannot be truly said of *humane Reason*, or any Faculty meerly *humane* or *creaturely*. And therefore, these Faculties have need of some *Help*, something to steer their uncertain Course, to fix their Rovings, to strengthen their Weakness, to reduce them to a Certainty and Stability, and that not only by presenting right Objects, but by assisting the Understanding to receive them, staying the Mind in its Attention upon them in Order to reduce them to *Action*.

Now nothing can do this but God, He that made the Understanding, and formed the other Faculties of the *Mind*, can only preserve them in their due Exercise, and restore them to it when they have err'd, and for this End He has given a *Manifestation*



of his Spirit to every Man to profit withal, which is what I call'd *Revelation* in the first Sense of the Word, that is, *Inward Immediate Revelation*, which by our late Writers is call'd *Inspiration*.

Now, the Controversy between *Reason* and *Revelation* in this Sense of the Word, is brought into a narrow Compass, for as upon these Principles *Reason* without *Revelation* is not a sufficient Instructor in Matters of *Religion*, so upon the same Principles, *Revelation*, though distinct from *humane Reason*, yet does not act without it, or separate from it, but acts upon it, by informing the understanding, and assisting the other Faculties of the Mind; so that neither *Reason* without *Revelation*, in this Sense, nor *Revelation* without *Reason*, but both together, the one heightned and improved by the other, make up the one certain Foundation of *Knowledge* and *Action* in Matters of *Religion*; for as God informs the Understanding, so He also acts upon the Will and Affections, by inclining and moving them to Objects according to His Will, and strengthening them with Power and Resolution to withstand all Temptations to the contrary.

WHICH, as it hath been proved to be agreeable to the Reason of Things, so it is perfectly agreeable to the Account we have of these Things in Scripture, where 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God, who commanded Light to shine out of Darknes*, is said to *shine into our Hearts, to give us the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of his Son Jesus Christ*. Again, 1 John v. 20. *We know that the Son of God is come, and he hath given us an Understanding*. Again, as before cited, *The Eyes of our Understanding are said to be enlightned, by the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*. And with Respect to the other Faculties of the Mind, it is said, Phil. ii. 13. *to be God, that worketh in us, both to will and to do of His own Pleasure*

*Pleasure*, which comprehends all that can be called a Principle of *Knowledge* and *Action*.

IN all which, and many other Passages that might be mentioned, the Declaration of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures, and the Reason and Nature of Things speak the same Language. And this is also acknowledged by that great pretended Advocate for *Reason*, the Author before cited (besides the Passages already cited from him) *Christianity as old, &c.* pag. 199. where after having quoted Bishop Taylor in these Words, " And if the " Holy Ghost, as Bishop Taylor says, works by " heightning and improving our natural Faculties, " he proceeds, it can only be by using such Means " as will improve them, in proposing Reasons and " Arguments to convince our Understandings, " which can only be improved by studying the " Nature and Reason of Things: I applied my Heart, " says the wisest of Men, to know, and to search, " and seek out Wisdom, and the Reason of Things: So " that the Holy Ghost can't deal with Men as rational Creatures, but by proposing Arguments to " convince their Understandings, and influence " their Wills, in the same Manner as if proposed " by other Agents." Upon which I would observe, first, that according to him, the Holy Ghost influences both the Understanding and Will, and is therefore a Principle of Knowledge and Action distinct from both, (in direct Contradiction to what he has elsewhere expressly declared) but this it does, it seems, by proposing Arguments to convince the one, and influencing the other; but this is not all it does, for besides this, in the Words of Bishop Taylor, it heightens and improves our natural Faculties, by enlarging the Understanding to apprehend, and strengthen the Will with Resolution and Power to pursue such Objects as it presents to it, which the Apostle calls, *being strengthened with*  
*Might*

*Might by His Spirit in the inward Man; and without this Improvement of the Understanding, and strengthening the Will, our Reason as a humane Faculty of it self could not certainly apprehend, nor the Will pursue to Action, that which the Holy Spirit proposes to it; so that the Holy Spirit improving our Reason, or Reason as assisted by it, is the only Principle of Certainty in Understanding, and Ability in Practice.*

To return therefore to the Case of *Reason* and *Revelation*, there is a real Difference between the one and the other, as between *Vision* and *Illumination*, we cannot see, (though we may have a Capacity of seeing) without *Light*; and on the other Hand, *Light* is of no Use where a Capacity of seeing is wanting. But *Revelation*, *Inward Immediate Revelation*, not only gives *Light*, and presents Objects, or in the Words of the last mentioned Author, *proposes Arguments to it*, but also opens the Eyes of the Understanding, to see and perceive them, heightens and improves it, which none but God that made the Understanding can do: And that He does this, as well as that he proposes Objects, or Reasons, or Arguments, is acknowledged by the Adversaries of *Revelation*, and it cannot in the Nature of Things be otherwise, as what God proposes may be, and sometimes no doubt is, above the Capacities of Men to perceive; so it is most reasonable to suppose, that He gives at the same Time an Understanding, or *enlarges their Understanding*, to perceive that which otherwise would be above their Capacities as Men, to understand; which being the Case upon the foregoing Principle, it can be no longer a Doubt which is the more preferable as a Guide or Instructor in matters of *Religion*, *Reason* or *Revelation* in this Sense of the Word, for though they both bear a Part in it, and go together, yet inasmuch as *humane Reason* receives

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its Certainty from *Revelation*, *Revelation* is in it self the more certain, according to that Maxim in the Schools, *Propter quod unumquodque est tale, illud ipsum est magis tale.*

It now remains to consider the Case of *Revelation* in the last Sense of the Word, that is, *Written Revelation*. It is plain, that this cannot be at all compared with *Reason* as a Faculty of the Mind, yet may be truly said to be an Object of that Faculty. But any *Propositions*, written or not written, offered to the Mind to be believed or practised, cannot properly be said to be a *Guide* or *Help*, or *Matter of Instruction* to the Mind, otherwise than as the Mind understands them. The Question then will return, *By what Faculty shall the Mind judge, whether an External Revelation proposed to it, be fit to be received as such? Shall the Reason of Man, unassisted by the Inspiration of God, be a Judge in this Case?* I think not. *What then?* As every Thing that bears the Name of *revealed Religion* is declared to be spoken or written by the *Holy Spirit of God*, so the *Spirit of God* must necessarily assist the *Mind* or *Spirit of Man*, for the understanding whether what is said to be so written, or spoken, be really what it is pretended to be, and also how best to apply the Truths thus conveyed to the Ends for which they are designed.

It is supposed on all Hands, that God does *reveal Truths* to the Minds of Men; and it must be also supposed, that when He does this, it is in a Way which the Person to whom this *Revelation* is made must understand, and as these *Truths* so revealed sometimes relate only to himself, and sometimes to others, to whom therefore they are to be conveyed by Word or Writing, when this last becomes the Case, *how shall he who bears or reads this Revelation, know that it comes from God?* Answer, *By the same Means whereby he knows that a Revelation*

lation immediately made to his own Mind, comes from Him, that is, as the *Spirit of God* evidences it self to the Mind, both by the Nature, End and Design of the *Truths* revealed, and the Manner of their being revealed, that is, by that *Life and Virtue* which accompany them. So a *Revelation* externally conveyed by Word or Writing, is evidenced to the Mind of him that receives it the same way, that is, by the Nature, End and Design of the Things revealed, and by the same Spirit influencing the Mind of him that hears or reads it, in Order to his believing and receiving of it.

Now, the Nature, End and Design of the *Christian Revelation*, contain'd in the Writings of the *New Testament*, is such, that it plainly declares it self to come from God. For that may justly be esteemed to come from God, which is most worthy to come from Him; and that is most worthy to come from Him, which tends to the reforming and perfecting *humane Nature*, by bringing of it back to that State of Purity and Perfection, in which *Man* as a *Creature* of God, bearing His Image, was at first formed, and this is evidently the great Design of *Christianity*, as well as that it promises Forgiveness of Sins that are past, upon Men's complying with the Terms, *viz.* *Submitting themselves to the Work of Repentance, and Amendment of Life, and Perseverance in a State of Holiness.* Now this is all that Mankind want, in order to their being happy, and this the *Christian Religion* proposes for them; so that 'tis in its Nature, End and Design, a most perfect *Institution*. For what can be added to that whose Precepts require inward Truth and Sincerity, perfect Love to God and Man, and that Men should be *Holy in Body, Soul and Spirit, as He that hath called them is Holy*, as hath been before observed.

But yet, if *Christianity*, as perfect as it is in the Purity of its Precepts, consisted only in *written Rules*

or *Doctrines*, it would not after all answer its End fully, because the Depravity of *humane Nature*, both in Understanding and Practice, is such, and the Prevalency of *vitious Habits* so strong, that without some *Help* inwardly and immediately conveyed to the Mind, to open the Understanding, and influence the Will and Affections, the best Precepts will not effectually prevail for the Ends proposed by them. And therefore, to render *Christianity* most compleat, there was, besides the Excellency of its Precepts, the *Help* of the *Holy Spirit of God* given for that Purpose; such an *Help* I have before proved to be absolutely necessary, from the Consideration of our weak, finite, limited Faculties, and the absolute Purity of the *Divine Being*, &c.

AND that it was given in the first Publication of the *Gospel*, I have also proved at large in my former Part, where it is plain from the Account delivered of it, that upon the preaching of the *Gospel* the *Holy Ghost* was given, by which Repentance was wrought, and the Heart purified; and in particular, that *God opened the Heart* of some, that they attended to the Things which were spoken by the *Apostles*, and on the other Hand, that the *Word* preached did not profit others, not being mixt with Faith in them that heard it. That is, they attended to it as Men only, not believing in that *Spirit*, by which the first Ministers of the *Word* preached, which would have opened their Hearts; they did not receive it as it really was the *Word of God*, but as the Word of Men: And as it is God alone that teaches and helps People to profit, they not believing this were not profited by it.

AND the Case was the same with Respect to the *Scriptures*: Some that were *unlearned* and *unstable*, not stedfast in their Faith in God, but leaning to their own Understandings, wrested them to their *Destruction*, not considering, that no *Prophecy*, or



*Doctrine*, or Exhortation, (for the Reason is the same) of *Scripture*, is of any private Interpretation, 2 Pet. i. 20. By which we must understand, (and the Original might have been translated) of a Man's own Interpretation as a Man, for if we understand private as distinguished from publick Interpretation, it leads directly to *Popery*. But as Holy Men of God spake and writ as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*, so there is Need of the *Help* of the same *Holy Ghost*, to understand and apply to our Profit and Edification what was so written or spoken: For, from a Parity of Reason, who so fit to interpret the Words of the *Holy Ghost*, as the *Holy Ghost*? And if this was the Case then, is it not so now? Is it not now as necessary, that we should receive the *Help* of the Holy Spirit, for the right understanding and Use of the Holy Scriptures, as in Primitive Times? I think much more so.

Now, that the Simplicity of the *Truth* is so much perverted, and the *Scriptures* wrested by each of the many Parties and Sects of *Christians*, to make them speak agreeable to their several *Systems*, and the original Text possibly having suffered by so many *Transcripts* and *Translations*, which are generally warped and twisted to the Minds of the *Transcribers* and *Translators*, and their Party. Now, nothing can preserve the *sincere Christian* from being influenced by these, to the perverting his Judgment or Practice, but the *Light* of the same *Spirit*, which was the Author of them, giving a right Discovery, what the true Mind of the *Holy Ghost*, expressed in the Scriptures is, as well as giving strength to cast off the Prejudices of Education and the Influence of Example and Authority, and take up, and hold fast the Profession of the *Christian Faith and Doctrine*, in the Purity and Simplicity of it, as well as to live agreeable to its Rules and Precepts.

FROM

FROM all which it is plain, that as the *Spirit of God*, is that which helps and enlightens the Mind for the right Use and understanding of the *Scriptures* or *written Revelation* ; so 'tis that which is the principal Ground of Certainty : Not the *Scriptures* themselves, unless we should suppose, which cannot be supposed, that every Thing therein written for our Belief and Practice, consisted of *self-evident Propositions*, which at first View beget an Assent : Not *humane Reason* of it self, unassisted by the *Inspiration* of the Spirit of *God*, for this, as hath been already observed, being a limited, fallible Principle, cannot by any Rule or Measure of its Invention or Contrivance, comprehend the Purposes of the Almighty, but Men will be in danger either of mistaking the true Meaning and Design of an Author divinely inspired, or adding thereto something of their own, or diminishing from it. Our Measures are likely to be too long or too short, or not rightly applied, when we take upon us without Him to judge of *Divine Things* ; and this is not only reasonable, and what may be expected, but it is notoriously evident, that Men judging of *Divine Matters* this Way, have been mistaken in every of these Respects.

FOR instance, first in Matters of *Belief* barely, which are purely speculative, and as such, the Objects of the Understanding. Is it not evident to any common Observer of Things, how Men have added to the plain Meaning and Design of the *Holy Ghost*, in the *Scriptures*, by contriving, and imposing *Creeeds* and *Articles of Faith*, which from the first Introduction of them into the *Christian Church*, became such a Bone of Contention, that *Christian Charity* (the Badge of Discipleship, and that wherein the Perfection of all Religion consists) was lost and destroyed, by the unnatural Feuds and Animosities, which so pestred the *Christian Church* after the Coun-

cil of *Nice*, for several Centuries, Bishops excommunicating and deposing one another, and the Deposed again excommunicating and deposing his Adversaries, whenever the *Emperor* became of this or that Party ; till at last an effectual End was put to the Controversy, and in a great Measure to *Christianity* it self in those *Eastern Parts*, by the prevailing of *Mahometanism*, as the Learned Dr. *Prideaux* in his Preface to the *Life of Mahomet*, has observed ; though I must take the liberty to dissent from him in this Respect, viz. That it was not the different Sentiments of *Christians* in those Days, or at any other Time, that was so prejudicial and destructive to the *Christian Religion*, as the *uncharitable* vindictive Way of managing the Controversies about them, and the same has opened Way for the present Attempts against the *Christian Name*, (but not to digress)

If we go into the *Western Parts* of *Christendom*, we shall find the Controversy in a great Measure terminated after a Time, by another Remedy worse than the Disease, viz. The growing Power of the *Bishop of Rome*, by which means, the several Parts of the *Papish Trumpery* were gradually by his Authority brought into, and established in the *Church*, a Religion bearing the Name of *Christian*, but a Composition of *Heathenish Rites* and *Jewish Ceremonies* ; and many of its Doctrines, contradictory not only to *Reason*, but to *common Sense*,) and all this imposed upon *Mankind*, not by Persuasion, but by Violence and Authority, to the enslaving their Understandings, and subjecting their Estates, and endangering their Lives or Liberties, (all contrary to the very Nature of *Christianity*.) Add to this, that after this Religion, (if it may bear that Name) had in a great measure taken Place, that Monstrous Birth, *the Divinity of the School-men*, was brought forth, a mixture of *Heathen Philosophy* and something bearing the Name of *Christian Do-*  
ctrine,



*ctrine*, which, it seems, could not be rightly taught and explain'd, without the Assistance of *Aristotle* and his Commentators ; which at this Day prevails too much among some, the ancient and modern Philosophy being brought in for Assistants, in Opposition to each other, in the late Disputes about several Parts of the *Christian Doctrine*. Now in all this, *humane Reason* has over done it, has stretch'd its Measure too far, meddled with things out of its Sphere, made a plain, easy Institution, difficult, by going about to explain it.

On the other hand, if we consider the practical Part of *Christianity*, which is the principal Thing designed by the blessed Author of it ; this, amidst all the virulent Controversies about matters of *Speculation*, is little regarded. But whilst Men are earnestly (as they would have it thought) contending for the *Faith* of the *Gospel*, (for such, every one accounts his particular Set of Doctrines or Opinions) they either neglect, or represent as impossible, the pure Precepts of it, treating them as matters of meer *Speculation*, very good in themselves, but never intended, or even possible to be reduced to Practice, in that Extent, in which our Lord and His Apostles delivered them ; which is in Effect, under a Pretence of contending for the *Faith*, destroying it, as to its only salutary End and Design, which was to *purify the Heart, to work by Love, to give Victory over the World, and the Corruptions of it, and in short, by the Power of it, to bring into, and preserve in a Conversation agreeable to the pure and perfect Precepts of the Gospel.*

Now, a Man may read all the *Creeeds* that have ever been published to the World, and be a considerable Proficient in the Subtilties and Distinctions of *Scholastick Divinity*, and all the Controversies now, or formerly subsisting, relating to matters of *Religion*, and make not one Step in Improvement respecting

respecting that which is the real Work of *Faith*; he may indeed improve in *Pride* and *Conceit*, and despise others who are more ignorant (as he supposes) than himself, (and 'tis well for them they are so) and in this *Conceit* may fancy himself a Believer, and apply to himself all the Priviledges belonging to such; whereas, he that sincerely believes that Christ *died*, or was delivered for our *Sins*, and *raised* again for our *Justification*, and in that *Faith*, humbly applies unto God for *Forgiveness of Sins* that are past, and for Power to overcome them in the remaining Part of his Life; though he may be ignorant of all the Controversies, which have no Relation to this great Work (and such are the greatest Part of them) this Man is certainly in the Way to receive all the Benefits of Christ's Coming in the Flesh, and the End of all that our Lord did and suffered for *Mankind* is effectually answered as to such an one.

BUT it may be asked, *Must we make no Profession of our Faith, in any System or Form of Words?* *Answ.* That which the Apostles of our Lord thought sufficient, ought not to be esteemed too short by us; now the Apostle *Paul* tells us expressly, *that if thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy Heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved.* However, if I may take the Liberty to speak my own Sentiments, of the several *Creeds* now extant, of which I have seen a great Number, I would chuse to express my Belief in the Words of that called the *Apostles Creed*, before any other of them, the Terms of it being most simple and unexceptionable, and as such, admitting least Occasion of Controversy.

BUT to return to the main Matter. By this time I hope, the sincere, honest minded Reader may be sensible, that *humane Reason* is not a proper Interpreter of *Scripture*, or *written Revelation*, not only

as being in it self a limited, fallible Principle, but that in Fact, it has erred both in matters of *Speculation* and *Practice*, by overdoing it, straining the String too far on the one ; and undoing it, leaving Things too loose on the other ; and consequently misapplying the great End and Design of *Christianity*, making of it more a *speculative* than *practical Institution*, the contrary to which is most certain, the principal Design of it being to reform *Mankind* in Practice.

AND as to matters which only relate to the Understanding, and terminate there, as there are (and it cannot be otherwise) different Capacities naturally, and different Degrees and Growths of Knowledge and Experience in Religion, so we are required to believe only according to that Capacity, and our present Degrees of Knowledge and Experience, and whenever it becomes necessary for us to make any Advances in Knowledge, in due Time God will give it us, He will reveal it unto us ; and in the mean time, we ought not to judge or despise, much less persecute one another, for not believing or professing to believe what we do not understand ; but the Strong bearing the *Infirmities* of the Weak, and in *Meekness* instructing them, and the Weak in *Modesty* and *Sobriety* attending to Instruction, and waiting for farther Enlargement of Understanding ; and both studious, principally to live and act according to their present Growths and Attainments, which without doubt, is all that God requires of them : And this Temper of mind the Spirit of God leads unto, that is, as He is All-wise, and knows our Wants, what is necessary for us and our Capacities, what we are able to bear, so He administers suitably, *Milk for Babes*, and *stronger Meat for those of full Age*, who by reason of long Use, have their Understandings exercised, and enlarged to discern more perfectly *Good and Evil*.



To sum up the Argument on this Head: whether by *Revelation*, we understand *inward* and *immediate*, or *outward*, *written Revelation*; God speaks both these Ways to *Mankind*, as unto rational, intelligent Creatures, and the Exercise of their Understandings, and other Faculties is not thereby suspended or impeded, but improved. And the *Divine Principle* acts upon them in Conjunction with them; yet as the latter not only receives Light, but Sight, and all its Certainty of Knowledge and Power of Action from the former, it is most reasonable that the *Divine Principle* should in all Things have the Preheminence, which is so evidently the Truth of the Case, that (besides the Reasonableness of it, which has been already proved) the contrary is a very great Absurdity, and unworthy the Dignity of the *Divine Being*, supposing that He concerns Himself at all with our Minds, by communicating any Thing to them, (which 'tis on all Hands supposed He does) that He should subject His *Revelations*, or that they should be subjected to Man's Judgment, as unto a more certain Rule or Criterion, the greater to the less, the infinitely wise *Fountain of all Knowledge*, to our scanty, limited *Reason*, fallible as it may be. It is therefore on all Accounts reasonable to conclude, that God who made *Man a reasonable Creature*, is always present with him, teaching and instructing him in all things necessary to his *present* and *future Happiness*, and this sometimes inwardly and immediately, and sometimes by the Means of former *Revelations*, (which are then only profitable to us, when brought to our Remembrance, and opened and applied to the present State of the Mind, and Circumstance we are under, by the same *divine Principle* from whence they at first proceeded.) And also preparing, opening and improving the Understanding, to receive and believe, and quickning and strengthening all  
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the other Faculties of the Mind to live, move and act accordingly, which none other can do, but He that formed the Mind, and gave it all those excellent Powers and Faculties with which it is endued.

THERE is another Difficulty which some Writers lay a great Stress on, and yet I think, upon the Principles before established is easily reconciled, which is this, The Writers on the Side of *Reason*, which they would have to be a *sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion*, without *Revelation*, represent their Opponents as *charging the Divine Being with Injustice and Partiality, for communicating the Knowledge of His Will by Revelation*, (by which they mean External written Revelation) *to a very small Part Mankind, and with-holding it from the Rest, so that the far greatest Part of Men, not only before the Coming of Christ, but since, are destitute of the only Means of knowing the Will of God, and doing it, and consequently of being happy.* Now this I think is easily and effectually reconciled upon the foregoing Principles; for if there be (as has been proved) an *inward*, as well as *outward Revelation*, and the first from the Nature of Things, and the state of *Mankind* considered as *Creatures* liable to Errors and Failures, must be universal, all *Mankind* are Partakers of it: Wherein then is the *Partiality*? Seeing God hath given *Mankind* universally the Knowledge of His Will, by a Principle discovering it to them, in their own Breasts, they are all without Exception so far Objects of His kind Notice and Favour; but Men not duly attending to this *inward Monitor*, (tho' a sufficient Guide to them if they regard it, in which Respect all are without Excuse) it pleased Him to make known His Will, and their Duty accordingly, to some Part of *Mankind*, in a more clear and explicite Manner than to the rest, moving and disposing them to publish the same by Word or Writing.

Now is it *Partiality* in God, that all are not Prophets, or Apostles, or Teachers, or Publishers of *Revelation*? If this were the Case, where would be the Learners, the Hearers, the Instructed? It might as well be alledged as *Partiality* in *Divine Providence*, that He has not formed all Men in an equal Degree of *Wisdom* and *Prudence*, every one as much an *Orator*, *Statesman*, or *Philosopher*, as *Cicero*, *Plutarch*, *Seneca*, *Plato*, &c. Again, where is the *Partiality*, that some part of *Mankind* are favoured with the Writings of the *inspired Penmen*, *Moses* and the *Prophets* in the Old, and the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* of Christ in the *New Testament*, which others have not, seeing the Residue of *Mankind* are not upon these Principles left to themselves, without *Sufficient Light* and *Instruction* to know their Duty, and *Help* to practice it, if they duly attend thereto; and it is most reasonable to suppose, that God requires no more of any Man, either to believe or practice, than in Proportion to what Understanding and strength He is pleased to give him, and so much as that, is no Doubt his indispensable Duty.

*To whom much is given, of them much is required*, and these are capable of serving their fellow Creatures in a greater Degree, and if they do so, from the Reason of Things, we may justly conclude, the greater will be their *Reward*; and on the other Hand, *to whom little is given, little from them is required*, but if they live up to that little, no Doubt but they are accepted with God, who is just and equal in all His Ways, and consequently does not require more of his Creatures, than he gives them Understanding and Power to know and practice, which takes in all *Mankind*, however ignorant or barbarous, or remote, if they sincerely walk up to that Degree of Knowledge and Understanding of their Duty, which at Times and Seasons is discovered to them in their own Breasts.

THO'



THO' it must at the same Time be acknowledged with humble Thankfulness, that the Advantage we are Partakers of is very great, who have the Benefit of the *Holy Scriptures*, and therein an express Declaration of the Will of God, that He will forgive us our Sins for *Jesus Christ's* Sake, upon our sincere and unfeigned Repentance and Amendment of Life; for which End, He also gives us the *Help of His Grace and good Spirit*. But this Advantage or Preference is not *Partiality*, unless it appeared, that all the rest of *Mankind* were left wholly to themselves, destitute of all Means of Knowledge and Assistance, respecting their Duty to God, and Acceptance with Him; any more than it can be said to be *partial* in the *Divine Being*, in that He has not made all intelligent Beings *Angels*, or all Men alike of *consummate Wisdom and Perfection*: But as He has made the several Classes of Creatures in Subordination to each other, from *Man* down to the smallest *Insect*, and His Wisdom therein does evidently appear; so He has made the several Individuals of the same Species, (*Mankind* as well as others) some more perfect in their Kind than others, and communicated some special Instances of His Care and Providence to some more than others, whose Duty is thereby enlarged, and all this without *Partiality*, seeing His Care and Providence is over all universally, according to that State of Being, and Degree of Perfection in which they are placed.

IN all which, the *Justice and Goodness* of God, and the *Reasonableness* of His Proceedings with *Mankind* as to a *future Judgment*, and *Rewards and Punishments*, is easily accounted for, (seeing He requires of them an Obedience in Practice, agreeable to that Understanding and Means of Knowledge He gives them, and no more) and the free Exercise and right Use of our *rational Faculties*, not

only secured, but improved : Inasmuch as it is supposed, that the *Divine Principle* (though it is sufficient when duly attended unto, and believed in, to help us to overcome Sin compleatly, and to live agreeable to the Will of God, yet) does not operate by Way of *Compulsion*, but *Perswasion*, which it is in our Power to attend unto, and concur with, or the contrary, to chuse or refuse what it proposes to us, and therefore in the Equity and Reason of Things, we become accountable to God that has given us these *Faculties*, and this *Assistance*, for our using or not using them to His Glory and our own Happiness : So that all the Purposes of *Religion* and *Morality* being most effectually secured this Way, what hinders our imbracing it with all *Humility* and *Thankfulness*, especially considering that the Blessed Author of the *Christian Religion*, was Himself a perfect Example, by Virtue of this *Divine Principle* which dwelt in Him without Measure, (for God gave not the *Spirit* by *Measure* to Him) of those Holy Precepts delivered by Him both in Doing and Suffering.

I have not made Use of any Authorities ancient or modern, to confirm the Truth of what has been advanced in this Treatise, chusing rather that the Doctrine should support it self by its own Reasonableness ; though on the other Hand, I would not be thought to dispise the Judgment of those who have sincerely laboured for promoting the Cause of *Christianity*, among whom the late Learned and Judicious Archbishop *Tillotson* was deservedly esteemed eminent ; and because the Author of *Christianity as old &c.* has several times quoted him, and some others under the Denomination of *rational Divines*, I think it not besides the Purpose, to let him and my Readers see what this great Man's Judgment was on the Point. I have been contending for, which surely must be a good Argument, *ad*  
*hominem*

*hominem*, with the last mentioned Author, as well  
 as have some Weight with my Readers in general.  
 In the second Volume of his *Sermons*, p. 303. *Ser-*  
*mon* 146. he has these Words, “ But after all this  
 “ is done for us, we are still without *Strength*, our  
 “ Nature being depraved and sunk into that Impo-  
 “ tency and Weakness, that without the powerful  
 “ Assistance of *Divine Grace*, we are utterly una-  
 “ ble to perform those most equal and reasonable  
 “ Conditions, which the *Gospel* requires of us, be-  
 “ ing, as the Scripture expresses it, *dead in Tres-*  
 “ *passes and Sins, and estranged from the Life of God*  
 “ *through the Darkness that is in us, and the Blind-*  
 “ *ness of our Hearts.* Being *enslaved to vitious Habits*,  
 “ and having a *Carnal Mind, which is Enmity to*  
 “ *God*, and renders us incapable to receive or relish  
 “ *Divine and Spiritual Things* : So that notwith-  
 “ standing all that our Blessed Saviour hath done  
 “ and suffered for us, and all the merciful Over-  
 “ tures of *Pardon and Happiness* which the *Gospel*  
 “ makes to us, all this will signify nothing to our  
 “ Benefit and Advantage, unless our *Impotency* be  
 “ relieved, and *new Life and Strength* be conveyed  
 “ to us, to awaken and excite us to that which is  
 “ good, to enable us to mortify and subdue our *evil*  
 “ and *corrupt Inclinations*, to break off our *vitious*  
 “ *Habits*, and to walk in the Ways of *God’s Com-*  
 “ *mandments* ; for we are not sufficient of our selves,  
 “ as of our selves, for any of these Things, but  
 “ our Sufficiency is of God : Without Christ *we*  
 “ *can do nothing*, and it is only through Him  
 “ strengthning of us, that we are able to do all  
 “ these Things, which are necessary to be done by  
 “ us, in Order to the obtaining that Happiness  
 “ and Salvation which the *Gospel* has promised, and  
 “ our Saviour hath purchased for us. And there-  
 “ fore our *merciful Redeemer*, that He might not  
 “ leave His Work imperfect, hath sent His Blessed  
 “ Spirit



" Spirit into our Hearts, to enlighten the Eyes of  
 " our Minds, and to open and dispose our Under-  
 " standings, for to receive of *Divine* and *Spiritual*  
 " *Truths*, to conquer likewise the Perverseness and  
 " Stubbornness of our *Wills*, and to set us at Liber-  
 " ty from the Slavery of our *Lusts*, (*for where the Spi-*  
 " *rit of God is, as St. Paul tells us, there is Liberty*)  
 " to renew our Natures, and to purify our Hearts,  
 " to mortify our corrupt Affections, and to assist  
 " us to every good Word and Work, to strengthen  
 " us against Temptations, to support us under  
 " Sufferings and Persecutions, and in a Word, to  
 " keep us by the mighty Power of God, and gra-  
 " cious Assistance of His Holy Spirit, thro' Faith  
 " unto *Salvation*."

ALL which is a clear and full Testimony to the  
 Necessity and Sufficiency of a *Divine Principle*,  
 for the Producing a virtuous religious Course of  
 Life, drawn from the Consideration of the Dark-  
 ness and Blindness of our *Understandings*; and the  
 Impotency and Weakness of our *Wills*, and the  
 Strength and Prevalency of *evil Habits*, &c. and  
 that without such a *Principle*, notwithstanding the  
 great and good Things which our Lord Jesus Christ  
 has done and suffered for us in His own Person, for  
*Remission of Sins that are past*, the Work would be  
 imperfect, and we should be utterly incapable to  
 obtain that Happiness which the *Gospel* has promil-  
 ed, and our *Saviour* has purchased for us. All per-  
 fectly agreeable to the Doctrine and Way of Rea-  
 soning laid down in this Treatise.

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## THE CONCLUSION

**H**AVING now finished what lay before me on this necessary Subject, so far as concerns *Unbelievers*, or such as any ways question the Truth of *Christianity*; I shall conclude with an Address to the Professors of it, first to those who *deny or question the Necessity, Power and Sufficiency of a Divine Principle*, for the Purposes so often mentioned.

It has been often Matter of Admiration to me, that there should be any who profess the Holy Scriptures to be their *Rule*, and yet do not believe in such a *Principle*. when nothing is more clearly and fully recommended throughout the whole Scriptures of both *Testaments*, but especially the *New*. It is plain to any who read the *Sacred Writings* with Attention, that the Spirit, Virtue and Efficacy of every Dispensation consisted in this *Principle*, as might easily appear by Enumeration of Particulars, with which I shall not at present detain the Reader. But with Respect to the *Gospel Dispensation*, to go about to prove it, would be as lighting a Candle to the Sun at Noon; it being evidently that in which all the Benefits of the *Gospel* center, and without which all is in vain, as to answering the great end for which it was designed, which was the *complete Salvation of Men*, as well from the Power and Dominion of Sin, as from the Guilt and Punishment due to it: This appears throughout the whole *Christian System*, and the Reason of the Thing being the same in all future Ages, as well as at the Primitive Times, it must be concluded to be designed and given as a standing permanent *Help* for the same good *Ends* to all Generations, according to the Promise of Christ, *that it should abide with them*. His Disciples and Followers

lowers, *for ever*. And do deprive the *Christian Religion*, of this, is to take from it that which alone renders it effectual for the great Purposes of *Religion*, which is a *Reformation of Life*, by renewing the Mind into a State of *Holiness* and *true Righteousness*, and preserving it therein; and leaves *Christianity* a beautiful Picture indeed, a Resemblance of very good Things, a Set of excellent Doctrines and Precepts, but Lifeless, without *Power*, *Virtue* and *Efficacy*, for the putting them in Practice.

AND therefore, I would recommend it to the most serious Consideration of *Christians* of this Generation, that as it was by the Power and Virtue of this *Principle*, that the *Primitive Christians* were what they were, *A People inwardly reformed in Heart and Spirit, washed, sanctified and Justified*: So it is by departing from this, that the *Christian Religion* is sunk into that Contempt in which it is fullen among many at this Day, and has been the great Means to open a Door for the present Opposition to it.

AND for that plausible Pretence of setting up *Reason* in Opposition to *Divine Revelation*, (though I would not say this is the Case with all who argue on that Side of the Question, yet) 'tis evident that many of them intend nothing else by it, but to follow their own Hearts Lusts, for which they will undertake to render Reasons such as they are. That this is really the Case, appears from hence, because it is notorious, that the most *Vicious* and *Profligate* (at least those of them who give themselves the Trouble to think at all of *Religion*) generally fall in with these Notions, and are become great Advocates for *Reason* in Matters of Religion, when at the same Time the general Conduct of many of them is so contrary to *Reason*, that it is below the Actions even of *Brute Animals*; so that their Design is plainly this, under that plausible Pretence, to  
live



*live and act as they list*: They oppose *Christianity* because of the Purity of its Doctrines, and they reject this *Divine Inward Principle*, because it improves them in secret, and in the midst of their vicious Courses, it meets them sometimes in a narrow Place, so that they cannot fly from it, or escape its Notice, and therefore as it gives them Trouble, by setting their Sins in order before them, they are resolved to seek Excuses and Subterfuges in order for a Time to quiet themselves, if possible, by consulting (what they account) their *Reason*, and by that Means strengthen themselves in evil doing. Whereas did Men but turn at the Reproofs of this *Divine Principle*, and believing in the Sufficiency of it, did follow and obey its plain Discoveries, tho' it would lead them at first in a Cross to their vicious Inclinations, as it cannot be otherwise, yet by degrees as they continue to believe in and obey it, the Cross which at first attended them in their Pursuit of Virtue this Way, will not only become tolerable, but easy and acceptable, and to those who are long accustomed to it, exceeding pleasant and delightful.

LASTLY, to you my Brethren, Professors of the same *Faith* with me, Witnesses and Partakers of the *Heavenly Calling*, thro' the *Divine Principle* of *Grace* and *Truth*, which is come by *Jesus Christ*, I beseech you, hold fast the Profession of this your *Faith* without Wavering: Watch against every Thing in your selves and one another, that tends to destroy or any wise weaken this *Faith*, let it arise from ever so specious Pretences or Insinuations, and in Order to it, call to Remembrance what it was that first gathered Us to be a People, and preserved our Forefathers and Elder Brethren, through a great Fight of Afflictions, and strong Opposition from the *Secular Powers*: Was it not this? That they, having witnessed the Work of *Sanctification*

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*through*

*through the Spirit of Christ, became so strengthened and encouraged thereby, that nothing could move them from their Stedfastness, and therefore in the Strength of this Faith, they held fast the Profession of it, continuing to assemble themselves to wait upon God, for the renewing of their strength and worshipping of Him according to His Will, when others, many of them, fled before their Enemies: And having by their faithful Obedience in doing and suffering, opened a Way for this State of Peace and Tranquility which we of this Generation are in the Enjoyment of, shall any of Us deny that Faith, and in Compliance with the Antichristian Notions of the Times, set up for self-sufficient independent Creatures? Shall any of Us who are the Posterity or Successors of those for whom God has done so great Things, hammer out a Religion which has none, or very little Relation to Him? God forbid, this will be (in the Prophet's Phrase) Forsaking him the Fountain of living Water, and hewing to our selves Cisterns, broken Cisterns that will hold no Water.*

AND therefore, I take this Liberty by Way of Friendly Caution, to put you in Remembrance of these Things; and as it is evident beyond all Contradiction, that the Work of Religion and Godliness, where ever it is rightly brought forth, is the *Work of God*, that we continually dwell near in Spirit unto Him, waiting upon Him, praying to Him and trusting in Him, both for Remission of Sins that are past, for His Beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ's Sake, and for the overcoming Sin in the Lust of it, and persevering in a Life of Holiness, which those that do, will in due Time witness the End of their Faith and Hope answered, which is the compleat Salvation of their Souls.